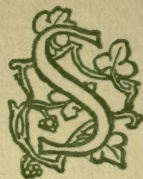
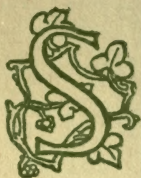


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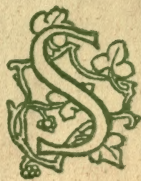
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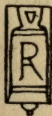


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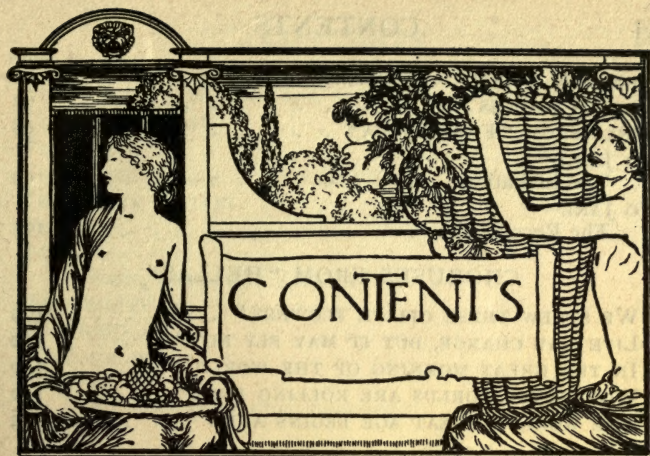


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INTRODUCTION

MORE than the others of that group of English poets who flourished at the beginning of the nineteenth century, and whose work, taken as a whole, gives to English literature its all but greatest glory, Shelley was the inheritor and the exponent of the ideas of the French Revolution. The French Revolution aroused and then disappointed Wordsworth, causing him to turn away from political ideals and to seek consolation in universal nature; it made Byron a rebel, and Southey a Laureate; but it gave birth to Shelley. And the chief effect of the

Revolution on English life and thought is to be sought in literature rather than in politics. The great wave that broke over Europe in the roar of the Napoleonic wars spent its strength in vain on the political structure of these islands, but the air was long salt with its spray. And the poems of Shelley, if it be not too fanciful to prolong the figure, are the rainbow lights seen in the broken wave.

The ideas of the Revolution and the passion of the Revolution glitter and vibrate in Shelley's poems. And these ideas, it must be remembered, in their earlier and cruder political forms, had but a short spell of life. They bred the giant that killed them; the modern scientific and historical temper finds it wellnigh impossible to regain the outlook of those who stood breathlessly waiting for the revelation of a new heaven and a new earth. So that it is not to be wondered at if the poetry that sprang from the political creed has been to some extent involved in the downfall of the creed. Certain it is that few of his readers, even among his professed admirers, read Shelley for his meaning; few, even among his critics, treat his message seriously. The people of England, said Burke, want "food that will stick to their ribs"; and the remark condenses in a phrase all that dissatisfaction with theory and dream which is heard as an undertone in most of the authoritative criticisms of Shelley. The poet has achieved immortality, but not on his own terms. He is

"a beautiful and ineffectual angel"—a decorator's angel, one might almost say, designed for a vacant space, not the authentic messenger of the will of Heaven. Or he is a moonlight visitant that soothes the soul with melodious words and beautiful images when the bonds of reality are loosened. As a prophet he is lightly esteemed, but when once the prophet's mantle is gently removed from his shoulders by tender official hands, he is welcome to stay with us, and to delight us in all restful places by the subtle marvels of his lyrical craft, and the iridescent play of his creative fancy.

Yet seeing that a poet is a poet only in so far as he reveals the beauty and the power that is universal and enduring caught from the confused lights and shadows of his own time, it is worth the pains to examine the main ideas that animate the poetry of Shelley. Some of these, it may not be denied, are utterly fallen from power. Like other revolutionary thinkers, Shelley hopes for the salvation and perfection of mankind by way of an absolute breach with the past. History is to him at best a black business, an orgy of fantastic and luxurious cruelty. Commerce is "the venal interchange of all that human art and nature yield." Gold—how far would gold have enthralled the imagination of poets if it had been a dull black substance with a slightly unpleasant scent?—gold is a god, or demon, of dreadful strength. Education and tradition, institution and custom

are made the marks of the same impassioned invective, simple sometimes almost to thoughtlessness, as in that passage of "Laon and Cythna" where British parental authority is thus described:

"The land in which I lived by a fell bane
Was withered up. Tyrants dwelt side by side
And stabled in our homes ;"

Sometimes rising to heights of grave denunciation, as in that other passage where is described how

"The Queen of Slaves,
The hood-winked angel of the blind and dead,
Custom, with iron mace points to the graves
Where her own standard desolately waves
Over the dust of Prophets and of Kings."

Yet this multiplied oppression, which is imposed on man by man himself, which has grown with his growth and is intertwined with his dearest interests, is conceived of by the revolutionary theorists and, at least in his earlier poems, by Shelley himself, as a thing separable from man, a burden laid on him by some dark unknown power, a net weaved around him by foreign enemies. One resolute act of inspired insurrection, and the burden may be cast off for ever, the net severed at a blow, leaving man free, innocent and happy, the denizen of a golden world.

In his later and maturer poems we may detect Shelley's growing suspicion that the burden of man is none other than the weight of "the

superincumbent hour," or of the atmosphere that he breathes ; that the net has its fibres entangled with the nerves of his body and the veins and arteries that feed his life. Yet he neither faltered nor repented ; he had learned

"To hope, till hope creates
From its own wreck the thing it contemplates ;"

and if the tyrant that oppresses mankind is immitigable Reality, he will be a rebel against Reality in the name of that fairer and no less immortal power, the desire of the heart.

Shelley is the poet of desire. To him, as to Blake, the promptings of desire were the voice of divinity in man, and instinct and impulse bore the authentic stamp of the Godhead. His pure and clear and wonderfully simple spirit could hardly conceive of a duty that travels by a dim light through difficult and uncertain ways, still less of a duty that calculates and balances and chooses. When he was lifted on the crest of some over-mastering emotion, he saw all clear ; dropped into the hollow, he could only wait for another wave. It is as if he could not live save in the keen and rarified air of some great joy or heroic passion ; and his large capacity for joy made him the more susceptible to all that thwarts or depresses or interrupts it. These two strains, of rapture and of lament, of delight in love and beauty, and of protest against a world where love and beauty are not fixed eternal forms, run through all the poetry of Shelley, answering

each other like the voices of a chorus. Our life on earth seems to him a stormy vision, a wintry forest, a "cold common hell"; but it has moments of exaltation which belie it, and by their power and intensity hold out a promise of deliverance. Thought and passion transform the dull suffering of this life into the likeness of "a fiery martyrdom," and by their very intensity bear witness to the greatness of the issues at stake.

It is somewhat absurdly made a charge against Shelley that the ideal which he sets before humanity is not a practicable or possible one. He had to deal with this sort of criticism during his lifetime, and in the preface to "Prometheus Unbound" he offers a grave explanation; "It is a mistake," he says, "to suppose that I dedicate my poetical compositions solely to the direct enforcement of reform, or that I consider them in any degree as containing a reasoned system on the theory of human life." No exact political programme is deducible from his works. No coherent or satisfactory account can be given of the changes that would be necessary to bring in the idyllic society that mocks his vision in the distance. But if the aspirations of a poet are to be tethered to what is demonstrably attainable, the loftiest legitimate ambition ever breathed in English verse would perhaps be found in those lines of "The Excursion" where an earnest wish is expressed for a System of National Education established universally by Govern-

ment. The creed of the Revolution was a noble creed, and although Liberty, Equality and Fraternity, considered as the basis of a political system, have been sadly battered by critical artillery, they have not yet been so completely disgraced that it is forbidden to a poet to desire them. Only in a world where they shall be more desired than they are with us can they ever become possible. And the gist of Shelley's teaching lies not in this or that promise held out of future good, but in the means that he insists on for its realization. The elusive vagueness of the millenium pictured in the weakest part of "Prometheus Unbound" detracts no whit from the loftiness and truth of the great speech of Demogorgon and the closing World-symphony. The early Christians, too, were deceived in their hopes of the millennium, but they, like the early alchemists, went not unrewarded by "fair, unsought discoveries by the way."

The very vagueness of Shelley's poetry is an essential part of its charm. He speaks the language of pure emotion, where definite perceptions are melted in the mood they generate. Possessed by the desire of escape, he gazes calmly and steadily on nothing of earthly build. Every visible object is merely another starting-point for the cobwebs of dreams. Like his own poet,

- "He will watch from dawn to gloom
The lake-reflected sun illumine

The yellow bees in the ivy-bloom,
Nor heed nor see, what things they be ;
But from these create he can
Forms more real than living man,
Nurslings of immortality."

His thoughts travel incessantly from what he sees to what he desires, and his goal is no more distinctly conceived than his starting-place. His desire leaps forth towards its mark, but is consumed, like his fancied arrow, by the speed of its own flight. His devotion is "to something afar from the sphere of our sorrow"; the voices that he hears bear him vague messages and hints

"Of some world far from ours
Where music and moonlight and feeling are one."

And this perfect lyrical vagueness produces some of the most ghostly and bodiless descriptions to be found in all poetry. His scenery is dream-scenery; it can hardly be called cloud-scenery, for the clouds that tumble in a June sky are shapes of trim and substantial jollity compared with the shifting and diffused ether of his phantom visions. The scene of his poems is laid among

"Dim twilight-lawns, and stream-illumined caves,
And wind-enchanted shapes of wandering mist."

And the inhabitants are even less definite in outline; the spaces of his imagination are

"Peopled with unimaginable shapes,
Such as ghosts dream dwell in the lampless deep."

The poet is himself native to this haunted and scarce visible world ; and when, in "Epipsychidion," he tells of the Being who communed with him in his youth, it is in this world that they meet :

"On an imagined shore,
Under the grey beak of some promontory
She met me, robed in such exceeding glory,
That I beheld her not."

It is pleasant to consider what a critic of the school of Johnson, if any had survived, would have said of these lines. "Here, Sir," he might have said, "he tells us merely that in a place which did not exist he met nobody. Whom did he expect to meet?" Yet the spirit of Romance, which will listen to no logic but the logic of feeling, is prompt to vindicate Shelley. The kind of human experience that he sets himself to utter will not admit of chastened and exact language ; the homeless desires and intimations that seem to have no counterpart and no cause among visible things must create or divine their origin and object by suggestion and hyperbole, by groping analogies, and fluttering denials. To Shelley life is the great unreality, a painted veil, the triumphal procession of a pretender. Yet, here and there, in the works of Nature and of Art—"flowers, ruins, statues, music, words,"—there are sudden inexplicable glories that speak of reality beyond. It is from the images and thoughts that are least of a piece with the daily economy of life, from the faithful attend-

ants that hang on the footsteps of our exiled perceptions, and from the dwellers on the boundary of our alienated world, from shadows and echoes, dreams and memories, yearnings and regrets, that he would learn to give expression to this hidden reality. Yet the very attempt defeats itself and is reduced to the bare negation of appearances. The highest beauty, as he describes it, is always invisible; the liveliest emotion passes into swoon, and takes on the likeness of death. Demogorgon, the lord of the Universe, is "a mighty darkness, filling the seat of power."

So habitual and familiar was Shelley's converse with this spectral world that both in his thought and in his expression it held the place of what is commonly called the real world. The figures of his poetry illustrate what is strange by what is familiar, and it is the shadows and spirits that are familiar. The autumn leaves scurrying before the wind remind him of "ghosts from an enchanter fleeing." The skylark in the heavens is "like a poet hidden in the light of thought." The avalanche on the mountain is piled flake by flake, as thought by thought is piled in heaven-defying minds,

"Till some great truth
Is loosened, and the nations echo round,
Shaken to their roots."

It is his outward perceptions that he seeks to explain and justify by a reference to the ex-

istences and forms that filled and controlled his daily meditations.

His poetry, as might be expected, has been found too remote and unsubstantial to satisfy the taste of many readers and even of some few lovers of poetry. It is lacking in human interest. The figures that he sets in motion are for the most part creatures of his own making, who have no tangible being outside the realm of his imagination. Minds that move naturally and easily only in the world of concrete existences are compelled to translate Shelley's poetry, as it were, into another dialect of the universal language, if they would grasp his meaning. Too often they have refused the task; they have been content to float along on his melody, and to indulge their sense of colour with the delicate tints of his vision. Even when he is thus read, there is no denying the matchless quality of his poetic genius, or the absolute mastery of his art. But the wisdom of his reading of life, and the scope and depth of his thought, have sometimes been questioned.

He died young, and the accumulated wisdom of old experience was never within his reach. Yet before he died he had graduated in the school of suffering, and had there learned lessons that only the wise heart learns. "Prometheus Unbound" is something more than a dance of prismatic lights and a concert of sweet sounds; it is a record of spiritual experience, subtle in its analysis, profound in its insight.

The supreme torture of Prometheus, inflicted by the Furies, comes to him in the form of doubt—doubt lest his age-long sufferings should all be vain, and worse than vain. The Furies, who are “hollow underneath, like death,” and who darken the dawn with their multitude, are the ministers of pain and fear, of mistrust and hate. They plant self-contempt and shame in young spirits; they live in the heart and brain in the shape of base desires and craven thoughts. Of all passions, the ugliest in Shelley’s eyes is Hate; the most terrible and maleficent is Fear. But Prometheus through his long agony feels no fear, and no rancour; the pity and love that endure in his heart are at last victorious, and the Furies, baffled, take themselves away. The first act is full of psychological study, and Shelley throughout is speaking of what he has felt and known and observed. But he embodies it in such unearthly forms, and so carefully avoids the allegorical manner, that the details of the drama, difficult as they often are of interpretation, have been wrongly regarded as freaks of ornament and fantasy. The main idea, the conception of Love and Life as a dualism, and of Love as the sole principle of freedom, joy, beauty and harmony, in Nature and in Man, appears in Shelley’s earlier poems, and strengthens with his growth, until it reaches its most magnificent expression in the radiant figure of Asia and the closing rhapsody of “Adonais.”

“That Light whose smile kindles the Universe,
That Beauty in which all things work and move,
That Benediction which the eclipsing Curse
Of birth can quench not, that sustaining Love
Which through the web of being blindly wove
By man and beast and earth and air and sea,
Burns bright or dim, as each are mirrors of
The fire for which all thirst ; now beams on me
Consuming the last clouds of cold mortality.”

His early death, though it has endeared him the more to his lovers, has also deprived him of a full meed of critical appreciation. The bulk of reputable criticism is written by middle-aged men, who have made their peace with the world, on reasonable and honourable terms, perhaps, but not without concessions. How should they do full justice to the young rebels, the Marlowes and the Shelleys, who died under the standard of revolt? They are tender to them, and tolerant, as to their younger selves. But they have accepted, where these refused, and they cannot always conceal their sense of the headstrong folly of the refusal. Nor can their judgment be disabled, for they have knowledge on their side, and experience, and the practical lore of life. Further, they can enlist poet against poet, and over against the heart that defies Power which seems omnipotent, they can set the heart that watches and receives. Is there not more of human wisdom to be learned from the quiet harvester of the twilight than from the glittering apostle of the dawn? Yet there is a wisdom that is not born of acceptance; and the spirit

that is to be tamed to the uses of this world, if it has much to learn, has something also to forget. The severest criticism that the world and the uses of the world are called upon to undergo is that which looks out on them, ever afresh, from the surprised and troubled eyes of a child. In the debate of Youth and Age, neither can expect to have it all his own way. It is therefore no unqualified condemnation of Shelley's poetry to say that it appeals chiefly to the young. And it is not true to say that it appeals to no others. Many men, it has been said, are poets in their youth; it would be truer to say that many born subjects of prose are tickled by sentiment in their youth, and beguiled by sense into believing, for a time, that they love poetry. The love of poetry is not so easily eradicable; it is not Time's fool,

"though rosy lips and cheeks
Within his bending sickle's compass come,"

and wherever there are poets, to the end of time, Shelley will find lovers.

WALTER RALEIGH.





It is hoped that the present selection of Shelley's poems will be found to contain all of his best-loved lyrical pieces. There is no great poet who offers a more hopeless task to the illustrator, if by illustration is understood a drawing that helps to the understanding of the poem. But Art begets Art, and there is surely nothing illicit about an embroidery of fair designs suggested by a reading of the poems. If they be found superfluous or irrelevant, they must share that condemnation with the preface.






POEMS
BY
PERCY BYSSHE SHELLEY





ALASTOR
OR THE SPIRIT OF
SOLITUDE





Nondum amabam, et amare amabam, quaerebam quid
amarem, amans amare.—*Confess. St. August.*



ALASTOR OR THE SPIRIT OF SOLITUDE

EARTH, ocean, air, belovèd brotherhood !
If our great Mother has imbued my soul
With aught of natural piety to feel
Your love, and recompense the boon with mine ;
If dewy morn, and odorous noon, and even,
With sunset and its gorgeous ministers,
And solemn midnight's tingling silentness ;
If autumn's hollow sighs in the sere wood,
And winter robing with pure snow and crowns
Of starry ice the grey grass and bare boughs ;
If spring's voluptuous pantings when she breathes
Her first sweet kisses, have been dear to me ;
If no bright bird, insect, or gentle beast

I consciously have injured, but still loved
And cherished these my kindred ; then forgive
This boast, beloved brethren, and withdraw
No portion of your wonted favour now.

Mother of this unfathomable world !
Favour my solemn song, for I have loved
Thee ever, and thee only ; I have watched
Thy shadow, and the darkness of thy steps,
And my heart ever gazes on the depth
Of thy deep mysteries. I have made my bed
In charnels and on coffins, where black death
Keeps record of the trophies won from thee,
Hoping to still these obstinate questionings
Of thee and thine, by forcing some lone ghost,
Thy messenger, to render up the tale
Of what we are. In lone and silent hours,
When night makes a weird sound of its own stillness,
Like an inspired and desperate alchemist
Staking his very life on some dark hope,
Have I mixed awful talk and asking looks
With my most innocent love, until strange tears
Uniting with those breathless kisses, made
Such magic as compels the charmed night
To render up thy charge : . . . and, though ne'er yet
Thou hast unveiled thy inmost sanctuary,
Enough from incommunicable dream,
And twilight phantasms, and deep noonday thought,
Has shone within me, that serenely now
And moveless, as a long-forgotten lyre
Suspended in the solitary dome
Of some mysterious and deserted fane,
I wait thy breath, Great Parent, that my strain
May modulate with murmurs of the air,
And motions of the forests and the sea,
And voice of living beings, and woven hymns
Of night and day, and the deep heart of man.

There was a Poet whose untimely tomb
No human hands with pious reverence reared,
But the charmed eddies of autumnal winds
Built o'er his mouldering bones a pyramid
Of mouldering leaves in the waste wilderness :—
A lovely youth,—no mourning maiden decked
With weeping flowers, or votive cypress wreath,
The lone couch of his everlasting sleep :—
Gentle, and brave, and generous,—no lorn bard
Breathed o'er his dark fate one melodious sigh :
He lived, he died, he sung, in solitude.
Strangers have wept to hear his passionate notes,
And virgins, as unknown he passed, have pined
And wasted for fond love of his wild eyes.
The fire of those soft orbs has ceased to burn,
And Silence, too enamoured of that voice,
Locks its mute music in her rugged cell.

By solemn vision, and bright silver dream,
His infancy was nurtured. Every sight
And sound from the vast earth and ambient air,
Sent to his heart its choicest impulses.
The fountains of divine philosophy
Fled not his thirsting lips, and all of great,
Or good, or lovely, which the sacred past
In truth or fable consecrates, he felt
And knew. When early youth had passed, he left
His cold fireside and alienated home
To seek strange truths in undiscovered lands.
Many a wide waste and tangled wilderness
Has lured his fearless steps ; and he has bought
With his sweet voice and eyes, from savage men,
His rest and food. Nature's most secret steps
He like her shadow has pursued, where'er
The red volcano overcanopies
Its fields of snow and pinnacles of ice
With burning smoke, or where bitumen lakes

On black bare pointed islets ever beat
With sluggish surge, or where the secret caves
Rugged and dark, winding among the springs
Of fire and poison, inaccessible
To avarice or pride, their starry domes
Of diamond and of gold expand above
Numberless and immeasurable halls,
Frequent with crystal column, and clear shrines
Of pearl, and thrones radiant with chrysolite.
Nor had that scene of ampler majesty
Than gems or gold, the varying roof of heaven
And the green earth, lost in his heart its claims
To love and wonder ; he would linger long
In lonesome vales, making the wild his home,
Until the doves and squirrels would partake
From his innocuous hand his bloodless food,
Lured by the gentle meaning of his looks,
And the wild antelope, that starts whene'er
The dry leaf rustles in the brake, suspend
Her timid steps to gaze upon a form
More graceful than her own.

His wandering step,
Obedient to high thoughts, has visited
The awful ruins of the days of old :
Athens, and Tyre, and Balbec, and the waste
Where stood Jerusalem, the fallen towers
Of Babylon, the eternal pyramids,
Memphis and Thebes, and whatsoe'er of strange
Sculptured on alabaster obelisk,
Or jasper tomb, or mutilated sphynx,
Dark Aethiopia in her desert hills
Conceals. Among the ruined temples there,
Stupendous columns, and wild images
Of more than man, where marble daemons watch
The Zodiac's brazen mystery, and dead men
Hang their mute thoughts on the mute walls around,
He lingered, poring on memorials

Of the world's youth, through the long burning day
Gazed on those speechless shapes, nor, when the moon
Filled the mysterious halls with floating shades,
Suspended he that task, but ever gazed
And gazed, till meaning on his vacant mind
Flashed like strong inspiration, and he saw
The thrilling secrets of the birth of time.

Meanwhile an Arab maiden brought his food,
Her daily portion, from her father's tent,
And spread her matting for his couch, and stole
From duties and repose to tend his steps :—
Enamoured, yet not daring for deep awe
To speak her love :—and watched his nightly sleep,
Sleepless herself, to gaze upon his lips
Parted in slumber, whence the regular breath
Of innocent dreams arose : then, when red morn
Made paler the pale moon, to her cold home
Wildered, and wan, and panting, she returned.

The Poet wandering on, through Arabie
And Persia, and the wild Carmanian waste,
And o'er the aërial mountains which pour down
Indus and Oxus from their icy caves,
In joy and exultation held his way ;
Till in the vale of Cashmire, far within
Its loneliest dell, where odorous plants entwine
Beneath the hollow rocks a natural bower,
Beside a sparkling rivulet he stretched
His languid limbs. A vision on his sleep
There came, a dream of hopes that never yet
Had flushed his cheek. He dreamed a veiled maid
Sate near him, talking in low solemn tones.
Her voice was like the voice of his own soul
Heard in the calm of thought ; its music long,
Like woven sounds of streams and breezes, held
His inmost sense suspended in its web

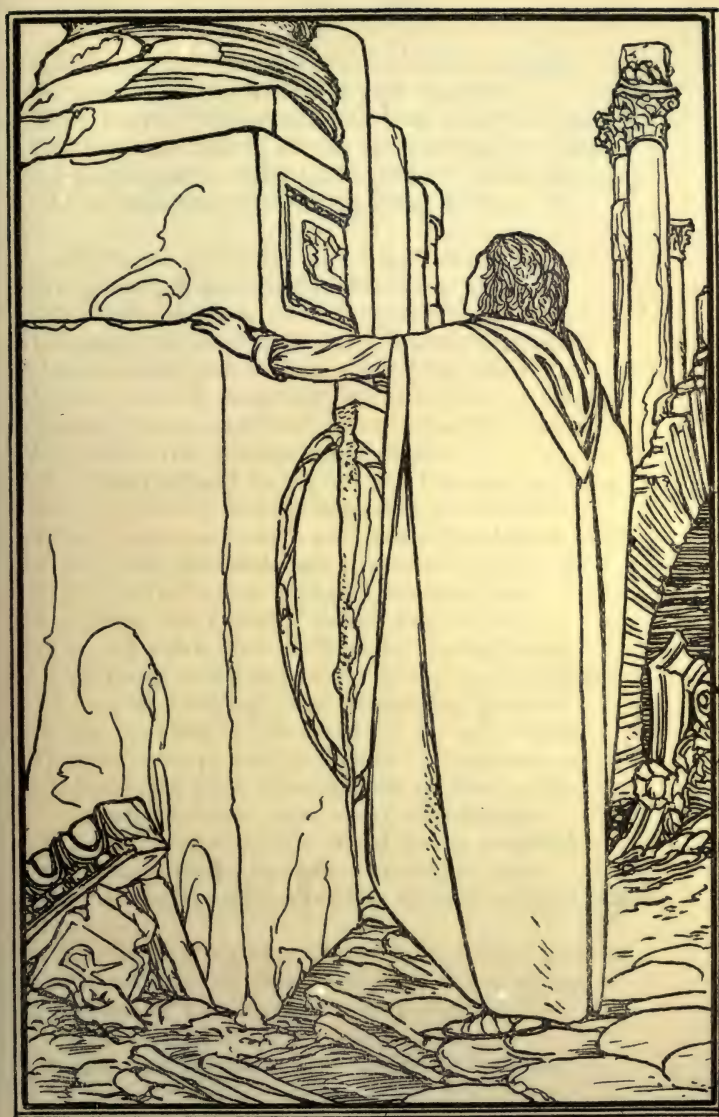
Of many-coloured woof and shifting hues.
Knowledge and truth and virtue were her theme
And lofty hopes of divine liberty,
Thoughts the most dear to him, and poesy,
Herself a poet. Soon the solemn mood
Of her pure mind kindled through all her frame
A permeating fire : wild numbers then
She raised, with voice stifled in tremulous sobs
Subdued by its own pathos : her fair hands
Were bare alone, sweeping from some strange harp
Strange symphony, and in their branching veins
The eloquent blood told an ineffable tale.
The beating of her heart was heard to fill
The pauses of her music, and her breath
Tumultuously accorded with those fits
Of intermitted song. Sudden she rose,
As if her heart impatiently endured
Its bursting burthen : at the sound he turned,
And saw by the warm light of their own life
Her glowing limbs beneath the sinuous veil
Of woven wind, her outspread arms now bare,
Her dark locks floating in the breath of night,
Her beamy bending eyes, her parted lips
Outstretched, and pale, and quivering eagerly.
His strong heart sunk and sickened with excess
Of love. He reared his shuddering limbs and quelled
His gasping breath, and spread his arms to meet
Her panting bosom : . . . she drew back a while,
Then, yielding to the irresistible joy,
With frantic gesture and short breathless cry
Folded his frame in her dissolving arms.
Now blackness veiled his dizzy eyes, and night
Involved and swallowed up the vision ; sleep,
Like a dark flood suspended in its course,
Rolled back its impulse on his vacant brain.

Roused by the shock he started from his trance—

The cold white light of morning, the blue moon
Low in the west, the clear and garish hills,
The distinct valley and the vacant woods,
Spread round him where he stood. Whither have fled
The hues of heaven that canopied his bower
Of yesternight? The sounds that soothed his sleep,
The mystery and the majesty of Earth,
The joy, the exultation? His wan eyes
Gaze on the empty scene as vacantly
As ocean's moon looks on the moon in heaven.
The spirit of sweet human love has sent
A vision to the sleep of him who spurned
Her choicest gifts. He eagerly pursues
Beyond the realms of dream that fleeting shade;
He overleaps the bounds. Alas! alas!
Were limbs, and breath, and being intertwined
Thus treacherously? Lost, lost, for ever lost,
In the wide pathless desert of dim sleep,
That beautiful shape! Does the dark gate of death
Conduct to thy mysterious paradise,
O Sleep? Does the bright arch of rainbow clouds,
And pendent mountains seen in the calm lake,
Lead only to a black and watery depth,
While death's blue vault, with loathliest vapours hung,
Where every shade which the foul grave exhales
Hides its dead eye from the detested day,
Conduct, O Sleep, to thy delightful realms?
This doubt with sudden tide flowed on his heart,
The insatiate hope which it awakened stung
His brain even like despair.

While day-light held
The sky, the Poet kept mute conference
With his still soul. At night the passion came,
Like the fierce fiend of a distempered dream,
And shook him from his rest, and led him forth
Into the darkness.—As an eagle grasped
In folds of the green serpent, feels her breast

Burn with the poison, and precipitates
Through night and day, tempest, and calm, and cloud,
Frantic with dizzying anguish, her blind flight
O'er the wide æry wilderness : thus driven
By the bright shadow of that lovely dream,
Beneath the cold glare of the desolate night,
Through tangled swamps and deep precipitous dells,
Startling with careless step the moon-light snake,
He fled. Red morning dawned upon his flight,
Shedding the mockery of its vital hues
Upon his cheek of death. He wandered on
Till vast Aornos seen from Petra's steep
Hung o'er the low horizon like a cloud ;
Through Balk, and where the desolated tombs
Of Parthian kings scatter to every wind
Their wasting dust, wildly he wandered on,
Day after day, a weary waste of hours,
Bearing within his life the brooding care
That ever fed on its decaying flame.
And now his limbs were lean ; his scattered hair
Sered by the autumn of strange suffering
Sung dirges in the wind ; his listless hand
Hung like dead bone within its withered skin ;
Life, and the lustre that consumed it, shone
As in a furnace burning secretly
From his dark eyes alone. The cottagers,
Who ministered with human charity
His human wants, beheld with wondering awe
Their fleeting visitant. The mountaineer,
Encountering on some dizzy precipice
That spectral form, deemed that the Spirit of wind
With lightning eyes, and eager breath, and feet
Disturbing not the drifted snow, had paused
In its career : the infant would conceal
His troubled visage in his mother's robe
In terror at the glare of those wild eyes,
To remember their strange light in many a dream



Of after-times ; but youthful maidens, taught
By nature, would interpret half the woe
That wasted him, would call him with false names
Brother, and friend, would press his pallid hand
At parting, and watch, dim through tears, the path
Of his departure from their father's door.

At length upon the lone Chorasmian shore
He paused, a wide and melancholy waste
Of putrid marshes. A strong impulse urged
His steps to the sea-shore. A swan was there,
Beside a sluggish stream among the reeds.
It rose as he approached, and with strong wings
Scaling the upward sky, bent its bright course
High over the immeasurable main.
His eyes pursued its flight.—“Thou hast a home,
Beautiful bird ; thou voyagest to thine home,
Where thy sweet mate will twine her downy neck
With thine, and welcome thy return with eyes
Bright in the lustre of their own fond joy.
And what am I that I should linger here,
With voice far sweeter than thy dying notes,
Spirit more vast than thine, frame more attuned
To beauty, wasting these surpassing powers
In the deaf air, to the blind earth, and heaven
That echoes not my thoughts ?” A gloomy smile
Of desperate hope wrinkled his quivering lips.
For sleep, he knew, kept most relentlessly
Its precious charge, and silent death exposed,
Faithless perhaps as sleep, a shadowy lure,
With doubtful smile mocking its own strange charms.

Startled by his own thoughts he looked around.
There was no fair fiend near him not a sight
Or sound of awe but in his own deep mind.
A little shallop floating near the shore
Caught the impatient wandering of his gaze.

It had been long abandoned, for its sides
Gaped wide with many a rift, and its frail joints
Swayed with the undulations of the tide.
A restless impulse urged him to embark
And meet lone Death on the drear ocean's waste ;
For well he knew that mighty Shadow loves
The slimy caverns of the populous deep.

The day was fair and sunny, sea and sky
Drank its inspiring radiance, and the wind
Swept strongly from the shore, blackening the waves.
Following his eager soul, the wanderer
Leaped in the boat, he spread his cloak aloft
On the bare mast, and took his lonely seat,
And felt the boat speed o'er the tranquil sea
Like a torn cloud before the hurricane.

As one that in a silver vision floats
Obedient to the sweep of odorous winds
Upon resplendent clouds, so rapidly
Along the dark and ruffled waters fled
The straining boat.—A whirlwind swept it on,
With fierce gusts and precipitating force,
Through the white ridges of the chafèd sea.
The waves arose. Higher and higher still
Their fierce necks writhed beneath the tempest's scourge
Like serpents struggling in a vulture's grasp.
Calm and rejoicing in the fearful war
Of wave ruining on wave, and blast on blast
Descending, and black flood on whirlpool driven
With dark obliterating course, he sate :
As if their genii were the ministers
Appointed to conduct him to the light
Of those belovèd eyes, the Poet sate
Holding the steady helm. Evening came on,
The beams of sunset hung their rainbow hues
High 'mid the shifting domes of sheeted spray

That canopied his path o'er the waste deep ;
Twilight, ascending slowly from the east,
Entwined in duskier wreaths her braided locks
O'er the fair front and radiant eyes of day ;
Night followed, clad with stars. On every side
More horribly the multitudinous streams
Of ocean's mountainous waste to mutual war
Rushed in dark tumult thundering, as to mock
The calm and spangled sky. The little boat
Still fled before the storm ; still fled, like foam
Down the steep cataract of a wintry river ;
Now pausing on the edge of the riven wave ;
Now leaving far behind the bursting mass
That fell, convulsing ocean. Safely fled—
As if that frail and wasted human form,
Had been an elemental god.

At midnight

The moon arose : and lo ! the aetherial cliffs
Of Caucasus, whose icy summits shone
Among the stars like sunlight, and around
Whose caverned base the whirlpools and the waves
Bursting and eddying irresistibly
Rage and resound for ever.—Who shall save?—
The boat fled on,—the boiling torrent drove,—
The crags closed round with black and jagged arms,
The shattered mountain overhung the sea,
And faster still, beyond all human speed,
Suspended on the sweep of the smooth wave,
The little boat was driven. A cavern there
Yawned, and amid its slant and winding depths
Ingulphed the rushing sea. The boat fled on
With unrelaxing speed.—“ Vision and Love ! ”
The Poet cried aloud, “ I have beheld
The path of thy departure. Sleep and death
Shall not divide us long ! ”

The boat pursued

The windings of the cavern. Day-light shone

At length upon that gloomy river's flow ;
Now, where the fiercest war among the waves
Is calm, on the unfathomable stream
The boat moved slowly. Where the mountain, riven,
Exposed those black depths to the azure sky,
Ere yet the flood's enormous volume fell
Even to the base of Caucasus, with sound
That shook the everlasting rocks, the mass
Filled with one whirlpool all that ample chasm ;
Stair above stair the eddying waters rose
Circling immeasurably fast, and laved
With alternating dash the knarlèd roots
Of mighty trees, that stretched their giant arms
In darkness over it. I' the midst was left,
Reflecting, yet distorting every cloud,
A pool of treacherous and tremendous calm.
Seized by the sway of the ascending stream,
With dizzy swiftness, round, and round, and round,
Ridge after ridge the straining boat arose,
Till on the verge of the extremest curve,
Where through an opening of the rocky bank,
The waters overflow, and a smooth spot
Of glassy quiet 'mid those battling tides
Is left, the boat paused shuddering.—Shall it sink
Down the abyss? Shall the reverting stress
Of that resistless gulph embosom it?
Now shall it fall?—A wandering stream of wind,
Breathed from the west, has caught the expanded sail,
And, lo ! with gentle motion, between banks
Of mossy slope, and on a placid stream,
Beneath a woven grove it sails, and, hark !
The ghastly torrent mingles its far roar,
With the breeze murmuring in the musical woods.
Where the embowering trees recede, and leave
A little space of green expanse, the cove
Is closed by meeting banks, whose yellow flowers
For ever gaze on their own drooping eyes,

Reflected in the crystal calm. The wave
Of the boat's motion marred their pensive task,
Which nought but vagrant bird, or wanton wind,
Or falling spear-grass, or their own decay
Had e'er disturbed before. The Poet longed
To deck with their bright hues his withered hair,
But on his heart its solitude returned,
And he forbore. Not the strong impulse hid
In those flushed cheeks, bent eyes, and shadowy frame
Had yet performed its ministry: it hung
Upon his life, as lightning in a cloud
Gleams, hovering ere it vanish, ere the floods
Of night close over it.

The noonday sun
Now shone upon the forest, one vast mass
Of mingling shade, whose brown magnificence
A narrow vale embosoms. There, huge caves,
Scooped in the dark base of their aëry rocks
Mocking its moans, respond and roar for ever.
The meeting boughs and implicated leaves
Wove twilight o'er the Poet's path, as led
By love, or dream, or god, or mightier Death,
He sought in Nature's dearest haunt, some bank,
Her cradle, and his sepulchre. More dark
And dark the shades accumulate. The oak,
Expanding its immense and knotty arms,
Embraces the light beech. The pyramids
Of the tall cedar overarching, frame
Most solemn domes within, and far below,
Like clouds suspended in an emerald sky,
The ash and the acacia floating hang
Tremulous and pale. Like restless serpents, clothed
In rainbow and in fire, the parasites,
Starred with ten thousand blossoms, flow around
The grey trunks, and, as gamesome infants' eyes,
With gentle meanings, and most innocent wiles,
Fold their beams round the hearts of those that love,

These twine their tendrils with the wedded boughs
Uniting their close union ; the woven leaves
Make net-work of the dark blue light of day,
And the night's noontide clearness, mutable
As shapes in the weird clouds. Soft mossy lawns
Beneath these canopies extend their swells,
Fragrant with perfumed herbs, and eyed with blooms
Minute yet beautiful. One darkest glen
Sends from its woods of musk-rose, twined with jasmine,
A soul-dissolving odour, to invite
To some more lovely mystery. Through the dell,
Silence and Twilight here, twin-sisters, keep
Their noonday watch, and sail among the shades,
Like vaporous shapes half seen ; beyond, a well,
Dark, gleaming, and of most translucent wave,
Images all the woven boughs above,
And each depending leaf, and every speck
Of azure sky, darting between their chasms ;
Nor aught else in the liquid mirror laves
Its portraiture, but some inconstant star
Between one foliaged lattice twinkling fair,
Or, painted bird, sleeping beneath the moon,
Or gorgeous insect floating motionless,
Unconscious of the day, ere yet his wings
Have spread their glories to the gaze of noon.

Hither the Poet came. His eyes beheld
Their own wan light through the reflected lines
Of his thin hair, distinct in the dark depth
Of that still fountain ; as the human heart,
Gazing in dreams over the gloomy grave,
Sees its own treacherous likeness there. He heard
The motion of the leaves, the grass that sprung
Startled and glanced and trembled even to feel
An unaccustomed presence, and the sound
Of the sweet brook that from the secret springs
Of that dark fountain rose. A Spirit seemed

To stand beside him—clothed in no bright robes
Of shadowy silver or enshrining light,
Borrowed from aught the visible world affords
Of grace, or majesty, or mystery ;—
But, undulating woods, and silent well,
And leaping rivulet, and evening gloom
Now deepening the dark shades, for speech assuming,
Held commune with him, as if he and it
Were all that was,—only . . . when his regard
Was raised by intense pensiveness, . . . two eyes,
Two starry eyes, hung in the gloom of thought,
And seemed with their serene and azure smiles
To beckon him.

Obedient to the light
That shone within his soul, he went, pursuing
The windings of the dell.—The rivulet
Wanton and wild, through many a green ravine
Beneath the forest flowed. Sometimes it fell
Among the moss with hollow harmony
Dark and profound. Now on the polished stones
It danced ; like childhood laughing as it went :
Then, through the plain in tranquil wanderings crept,
Reflecting every herb and drooping bud
That overhung its quietness.—“ O stream !
Whose source is inaccessibly profound,
Whither do thy mysterious waters tend ?
Thou imagest my life. Thy darksome stillness,
Thy dazzling waves, thy loud and hollow gulphs,
Thy searchless fountain, and invisible course
Have each their type in me : and the wide sky,
And measureless ocean may declare as soon
What oozy cavern or what wandering cloud
Contains thy waters, as the universe
Tell where these living thoughts reside, when stretched
Upon thy flowers my bloodless limbs shall waste
I' the passing wind ! ”

Beside the grassy shore
Of the small stream he went ; he did impress
On the green moss his tremulous step, that caught
Strong shuddering from his burning limbs. As one
Roused by some joyous madness from the couch
Of fever, he did move ; yet, not like him,
Forgetful of the grave, where, when the flame
Of his frail exultation shall be spent,
He must descend. With rapid steps he went
Beneath the shade of trees, beside the flow
Of the wild babbling rivulet ; and now
The forest's solemn canopies were changed
For the uniform and lightsome evening sky.
Grey rocks did peep from the spare moss, and stemmed
The struggling brook : tall spires of windlestrae
Threw their thin shadows down the rugged slope,
And nought but knarlèd roots of ancient pines,
Branchless and blasted, clenched with grasping roots
The unwilling soil. A gradual change was here,
Yet ghastly. For, as fast years flow away,
The smooth brow gathers, and the hair grows thin
And white, and where irradiate dewy eyes
Had shone, gleam stony orbs :—so from his steps
Bright flowers departed, and the beautiful shade
Of the green groves, with all their odorous winds
And musical motions. Calm, he still pursued
The stream, that with a larger volume now
Rolled through the labyrinthine dell ; and there
Fretted a path through its descending curves
With its wintry speed. On every side now rose
Rocks, which, in unimaginable forms,
Lifted their black and barren pinnacles
In the light of evening, and its precipice
Obscuring the ravine, disclosed above,
'Mid toppling stones, black gulphs and yawning caves,
Whose windings gave ten thousand various tongues
To the loud stream. Lo ! where the pass expands

Its stony jaws, the abrupt mountain breaks,
And seems, with its accumulated crags,
To overhang the world : for wide expand
Beneath the wan stars and descending moon
Islanded seas, blue mountains, mighty streams,
Dim tracts and vast, robed in the lustrous gloom
Of leaden-coloured even, and fiery hills
Mingling their flames with twilight, on the verge
Of the remote horizon. The near scene,
In naked and severe simplicity,
Made contrast with the universe. A pine,
Rock-rooted, stretched athwart the vacancy
Its swinging boughs, to each inconstant blast
Yielding one only response, at each pause
In most familiar cadence, with the howl,
The thunder and the hiss of homeless streams
Mingling its solemn song, whilst the broad river,
Foaming and hurrying o'er its rugged path,
Fell into that immeasurable void
Scattering its waters to the passing winds.

Yet the grey precipice and solemn pine,
And torrent, were not all ;—one silent nook
Was there. Even on the edge of that vast mountain,
Upheld by knotty roots and fallen rocks,
It overlooked in its serenity
The dark earth, and the bending vault of stars.
It was a tranquil spot, that seemed to smile
Even in the lap of horror. Ivy clasped
The fissured stones with its entwining arms,
And did embower with leaves for ever green,
And berries dark, the smooth and even space
Of its inviolated floor, and here
The children of the autumnal whirlwind bore,
In wanton sport, those bright leaves, whose decay,
Red, yellow, or aetherially pale,
Rivals the pride of summer. 'Tis the haunt

Of every gentle wind, whose breath can teach
The wilds to love tranquillity. One step,
One human step alone, has ever broken
The stillness of its solitude :—one voice
Alone inspired its echoes ;—even that voice
Which hither came, floating among the winds,
And led the loveliest among human forms
To make their wild haunts the depository
Of all the grace and beauty that endued
Its motions, render up its majesty,
Scatter its music on the unfeeling storm,
And to the damp leaves and blue cavern mould,
Nurses of rainbow flowers and branching moss,
Commit the colours of that varying cheek,
That snowy breast, those dark and drooping eyes.

The dim and hornèd moon hung low, and poured
A sea of lustre on the horizon's verge
That overflowed its mountains. Yellow mist
Filled the unbounded atmosphere, and drank
Wan moonlight even to fulness : not a star
Shone, not a sound was heard ; the very winds,
Danger's grim playmates, on that precipice
Slept, clasped in his embrace.—O, storm of death !
Whose sightless speed divides this sullen night :
And thou, colossal Skeleton, that, still
Guiding its irresistible career
In thy devastating omnipotence,
Art king of this frail world, from the red field
Of slaughter, from the reeking hospital,
The patriot's sacred couch, the snowy bed
Of innocence, the scaffold and the throne,
A mighty voice invokes thee. Ruin calls
His brother Death. A rare and regal prey
He hath prepared, prowling around the world ;
Glutted with which thou mayst repose, and men
Go to their graves like flowers or creeping worms,

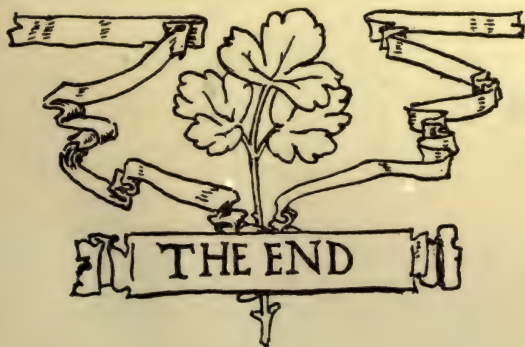
Nor ever more offer at thy dark shrine
The unheeded tribute of a broken heart.

When on the threshold of the green recess
The wanderer's footsteps fell, he knew that death
Was on him. Yet a little, ere it fled,
Did he resign his high and holy soul
To images of the majestic past,
That paused within his passive being now,
Like winds that bear sweet music, when they breathe
Through some dim latticed chamber. He did place
His pale lean hand upon the rugged trunk
Of the old pine. Upon an ivied stone
Reclined his languid head, his limbs did rest,
Diffused and motionless, on the smooth brink
Of that obscurest chasm ;—and thus he lay,
Surrendering to their final impulses
The hovering powers of life. Hope and despair,
The torturers, slept ; no mortal pain or fear
Marred his repose, the influxes of sense,
And his own being unalloyed by pain,
Yet feebler and more feeble, calmly fed
The stream of thought, till he lay breathing there
At peace, and faintly smiling :—his last sight
Was the great moon, which o'er the western line
Of the wide world her mighty horn suspended,
With whose dun beams inwoven darkness seemed
To mingle. Now upon the jagged hills
It rests, and still as the divided frame
Of the vast meteor sunk, the Poet's blood,
That ever beat in mystic sympathy
With nature's ebb and flow, grew feebler still :
And when two lessening points of light alone
Gleamed through the darkness, the alternate gasp
Of his faint respiration scarce did stir
The stagnate night :—till the minutest ray
Was quenched, the pulse yet lingered in his heart.

It paused—it fluttered. But when heaven remained
Utterly black, the murky shades involved
An image, silent, cold, and motionless,
As their own voiceless earth and vacant air.
Even as a vapour fed with golden beams
That ministered on sunlight, ere the west
Eclipses it, was now that wondrous frame—
No sense, no motion, no divinity—
A fragile lute, on whose harmonious strings
The breath of heaven did wander—a bright stream
Once fed with many-voicèd waves—a dream
Of youth, which night and time have quenched for ever,
Still, dark, and dry, and unremembered now.

O, for Medea's wondrous alchemy,
Which wheresoe'er it fell made the earth gleam
With bright flowers, and the wintry boughs exhale
From vernal blooms fresh fragrance! O, that God,
Profuse of poisons, would concede the chalice
Which but one living man has drained, who now,
Vessel of deathless wrath, a slave that feels
No proud exemption in the blighting curse
He bears, over the world wanders for ever,
Lone as incarnate death! O, that the dream
Of dark magician in his visioned cave,
Raking the cinders of a crucible
For life and power, even when his feeble hand
Shakes in its last decay, were the true law
Of this so lovely world! But thou art fled
Like some frail exhalation; which the dawn
Robes in its golden beams,—ah! thou hast fled!
The brave, the gentle, and the beautiful,
The child of grace and genius. Heartless things
Are done and said i' the world, and many worms
And beasts and men live on, and mighty Earth
From sea and mountain, city and wilderness,
In vesper low or joyous orison,

Lifts still its solemn voice :—but thou art fled—
Thou canst no longer know or love the shapes
Of this phantasmal scene, who have to thee
Been purest ministers, who are, alas !
Now thou art not. Upon those pallid lips
So sweet even in their silence, on those eyes
That image sleep in death, upon that form
Yet safe from the worm's outrage, let no tear
Be shed—not even in thought. Nor, when those hues
Are gone, and those divinest lineaments,
Worn by the senseless wind, shall live alone
In the frail pauses of this simple strain,
Let not high verse, mourning the memory
Of that which is no more, or painting's woe
Or sculpture, speak in feeble imagery
Their own cold powers. Art and eloquence,
And all the shows o' the world are frail and vain
To weep a loss that turns their lights to shade.
It is a woe too 'deep for tears,' when all
Is reft at once, when some surpassing Spirit,
Whose light adorned the world around it, leaves
Those who remain behind, not sobs or groans,
The passionate tumult of a clinging hope ;
But pale despair and cold tranquillity,
Nature's vast frame, the web of human things,
Birth and the grave, that are not as they were.





MISCELLANEOUS



MISCELLANEOUS



POEMS



MISCELLANEOUS POEMS



A SUMMER-EVENING CHURCH-YARD

LECHLADE, GLOUCESTERSHIRE

THE wind has swept from the wide atmosphere
Each vapour that obscured the sunset's ray ;
And pallid evening twines its beaming hair
In duskier braids around the languid eyes of day :
Silence and twilight, unbeloved of men,
Creep hand in hand from yon obscurest glen.

They breathe their spells towards the departing day,
Encompassing the earth, air, stars, and sea ;
Light, sound, and motion own the potent sway,
Responding to the charm with its own mystery.
The winds are still, or the dry church-tower grass
Knows not their gentle motions as they pass.

Thou too, ærial Pile! whose pinnacles
 Point from one shrine like pyramids of fire,
 Obeyest in silence their sweet solemn spells,
 Clothing in hues of heaven thy dim and distant spire,
 Around whose lessening and invisible height
 Gather among the stars the clouds of night.

The dead are sleeping in their sepulchres :
 And, mouldering as they sleep, a thrilling sound
 Half sense, half thought, among the darkness stirs,
 Breathed from their wormy beds all living things
 around,
 And mingling with the still night and mute sky
 Its awful hush is felt inaudibly.

Thus solemnized and softened, death is mild
 And terrorless as this serenest night :
 Here could I hope, like some enquiring child
 Sporting on graves, that death did hide from human
 sight
 Sweet secrets, or beside its breathless sleep
 That loveliest dreams perpetual watch did keep.

TO COLERIDGE

ΔΑΚΡΥΣΙ ΔΙΟΙΣΩ ΠΟΤΜΟΝ ΑΠΟΤΜΟΝ

O! THERE are spirits of the air,
 And genii of the evening breeze,
 And gentle ghosts, with eyes as fair
 As star-beams among twilight trees :—
 Such lovely ministers to meet
 Oft hast thou turned from men thy lonely feet.

With mountain winds, and babbling springs,
And moonlight seas, that are the voice
Of these inexplicable things,

Thou didst hold commune, and rejoice
When they did answer thee ; but they
Cast, like a worthless boon, thy love away.

And thou hast sought in starry eyes

Beams that were never meant for thine,
Another's wealth :—tame sacrifice

To a fond faith ! still dost thou pine ?
Still dost thou hope that greeting hands,
Voice, looks, or lips, may answer thy demands ?

Ah ! wherefore didst thou build thine hope

On the false earth's inconstancy ?

Did thine own mind afford no scope

Of love, or moving thoughts to thee ?

That natural scenes or human smiles

Could steal the power to wind thee in their wiles.

Yes, all the faithless smiles are fled

Whose falsehood left thee broken-hearted ;

The glory of the moon is dead ;

Night's ghosts and dreams have now departed ;

Thine own soul still is true to thee,

But changed to a foul fiend through misery.

This fiend, whose ghastly presence ever

Beside thee like thy shadow hangs,

Dream not to chase ;—the mad endeavour

Would scourge thee to severer pangs.

Be as thou art. Thy settled fate,

Dark as it is, all change would aggravate.

TO WORDSWORTH

POET of Nature, thou hast wept to know
That things depart which never may return :
Childhood and youth, friendship and love's first glow,
Have fled like sweet dreams, leaving thee to mourn.
These common woes I feel. One loss is mine
Which thou too feel'st, yet I alone deplore.
Thou wert as a lone star, whose light did shine
On some frail bark in winter's midnight roar :
Thou hast like to a rock-built refuge stood
Above the blind and battling multitude :
In honoured poverty thy voice did weave
Songs consecrate to truth and liberty,—
Deserting these, thou leavest me to grieve,
Thus having been, that thou shouldst cease to be.

SONNET

OZYMANDIAS

I MET a traveller from an antique land
Who said : Two vast and trunkless legs of stone
Stand in the desert. Near them, on the sand,
Half sunk, a shattered visage lies, whose frown,
And wrinkled lip, and sneer of cold command,
Tell that its sculptor well those passions read
Which yet survive, stamped on these lifeless things,
The hand that mocked them and the heart that fed :
And on the pedestal these words appear :
" My name is Ozymandias, king of kings :
Look on my works, ye Mighty, and despair !"
Nothing beside remains. Round the decay
Of that colossal wreck, boundless and bare
The lone and level sands stretch far away.

HYMN TO INTELLECTUAL BEAUTY

I

THE awful shadow of some unseen Power
Floats though unseen amongst us,—visiting
This various world with an inconstant wing
As summer winds that creep from flower to flower,—
Like moonbeams that behind some piny mountain
shower,
It visits with inconstant glance
Each human heart and countenance;
Like hues and harmonies of evening,—
Like clouds in starlight widely spread,—
Like memory of music fled,—
Like aught that for its grace may be
Dear, and yet dearer for its mystery.

2

Spirit of BEAUTY, that dost consecrate
With thine own hues all thou dost shine upon
Of human thought or form,—where art thou gone?
Why dost thou pass away and leave our state,
This dim vast vale of tears, vacant and desolate?
Ask why the sunlight not for ever
Weaves rainbows o'er yon mountain river,
Why aught should fail and fade that once is shown.
Why fear and dream and death and birth
Cast on the daylight of this earth
Such gloom,—why man has such a scope
For love and hate, despondency and hope?

3

No voice from some sublimer world hath ever
To sage or poet these responses given—
Therefore the names of Demon, Ghost, and Heaven,
Remain the records of their vain endeavour,

Frail spells—whose uttered charm might not avail to
 sever,
 From all we hear and all we see,
 Doubt, chance, and mutability.
Thy light alone—like mist o'er mountains driven,
 Or music by the night wind sent,
 Through strings of some still instrument,
 Or moonlight on a midnight stream,
Gives grace and truth to life's unquiet dream.

4

Love, Hope, and Self-esteem, like clouds depart
 And come, for some uncertain moments lent.
 Man were immortal, and omnipotent,
Didst thou, unknown and awful as thou art,
Keep with thy glorious train firm state within his heart.
 Thou messenger of sympathies,
 That wax and wane in lovers' eyes—
Thou—that to human thought art nourishment,
 Like darkness to a dying flame!
 Depart not as thy shadow came,
 Depart not—lest the grave should be,
Like life and fear, a dark reality.

5

While yet a boy I sought for ghosts, and sped
 Through many a listening chamber, cave and ruin,
 And starlight wood, with fearful steps pursuing
Hopes of high talk with the departed dead.
I called on poisonous names with which our youth is fed,
 I was not heard—I saw them not—
 When musing deeply on the lot
Of life, at the sweet time when winds are wooing
 All vital things that wake to bring
 News of birds and blossoming,—
 Sudden, thy shadow fell on me;
I shrieked, and clasped my hands in ecstasy!

6

I vowed that I would dedicate my powers
To thee and thine—have I not kept the vow?
With beating heart and streaming eyes, even now
I call the phantoms of a thousand hours
Each from his voiceless grave: they have in visioned
 bowers
Of studious zeal or love's delight
Outwatched with me the envious night—
They know that never joy illumed my brow
Unlinked with hope that thou wouldst free
This world from its dark slavery,
That thou—O awful LOVELINESS,
Wouldst give whate'er these words cannot express.

7

The day becomes more solemn and serene
When noon is past—there is a harmony
In autumn, and a lustre in its sky,
Which through the summer is not heard or seen,
As if it could not be, as if it had not been!
Thus let thy power, which like the truth
Of nature on my passive youth
Descended, to my onward life supply
Its calm—to one who worships thee,
And every form containing thee,
Whom, SPIRIT fair, thy spells did bind
To fear himself, and love all human kind.





LINES WRITTEN AMONG THE EUGANEAN HILLS

OCTOBER, 1818

MANY a green isle needs must be
In the deep wide sea of misery,
Or the mariner, worn and wan,
Never thus could voyage on
Day and night, and night and day,
Drifting on his dreary way,
With the solid darkness black
Closing round his vessel's track ;
Whilst above the sunless sky,
Big with clouds, hangs heavily,
And behind the tempest fleet
Hurries on with lightning feet,
Riving sail, and cord, and plank,
Till the ship has almost drank
Death from the o'er-brimming deep ;
And sinks down, down, like that sleep
When the dreamer seems to be
Weltering through eternity ;
And the dim low line before
Of a dark and distant shore

Still recedes, as ever still
Longing with divided will,
But no power to seek or shun,
He is ever drifted on
O'er the unreposing wave
To the haven of the grave.
What if there no friends will greet ;
What if there no heart will meet
His with love's impatient beat ;
Wander wheresoe'er he may,
Can he dream before that day
To find refuge from distress
In friendship's smile, in love's caress ?
Then 'twill wreak him little woe
Whether such there be or no :
Senseless is the breast, and cold,
Which relenting love would fold ;
Bloodless are the veins and chill
Which the pulse of pain did fill ;
Every little living nerve
That from bitter words did swerve
Round the tortured lips and brow,
Are like sapless leaflets now
Frozen upon December's bough.
On the beach of a northern sea
Which tempests shake eternally,
As once the wretch there lay to sleep,
Lies a solitary heap,
One white skull and seven dry bones,
On the margin of the stones,
Where a few grey rushes stand,
Boundaries of the sea and land :
Nor is heard one voice of wail
But the sea-mews', as they sail
O'er the billows of the gale ;
Or the whirlwind up and down
Howling like a slaughtered town,

When a king in glory rides
Through the pomp of fratricides :
Those unburied bones around
There is many a mournful sound ;
There is no lament for him,
Like a sunless vapour, dim,
Who once clothed with life and thought
What now moves nor murmurs not.

Aye, many flowering islands lie
In the waters of wide Agony :
To such a one this morn was led,
My bark by soft winds piloted :
'Mid the mountains Euganean
I stood listening to the paeon,
With which the legioned rooks did hail
The sun's uprise majestic ;
Gathering round with wings all hoar,
Through the dewy mist they soar
Like grey shades, till the eastern heaven
Bursts, and then, as clouds of even,
Flecked with fire and azure, lie
In the unfathomable sky,
So their plumes of purple grain,
Starred with drops of golden rain,
Gleam above the sunlit woods,
As in silent multitudes
On the morning's fitful gale
Through the broken mist they sail,
And the vapours cloven and gleaming
Follow down the dark steep streaming,
Till all is bright, and clear, and still,
Round the solitary hill.

Beneath is spread like a green sea
The waveless plain of Lombardy,
Bounded by the vaporious air,

Islanded by cities fair ;
Underneath day's azure eyes,
Ocean's nursling, Venice lies,
A peopled labyrinth of walls,
Amphitrite's destined halls,
Which her hoary sire now paves
With his blue and beaming waves.
Lo ! the sun upsprings behind,
Broad, red, radiant, half reclined
On the level quivering line
Of the waters crystalline ;
And before that chasm of light,
As within a furnace bright,
Column, tower, and dome, and spire,
Shine like obelisks of fire,
Pointing with inconstant motion
From the altar of dark ocean
To the sapphire-tinted skies ;
As the flames of sacrifice
From the marble shrines did rise,
As to pierce the dome of gold
Where Apollo spoke of old.

Sun-girt City, thou hast been
Ocean's child, and then his queen ;
Now is come a darker day,
And thou soon must be his prey,
If the power that raised thee here
Hallow so thy watery bier.
A less drear ruin than now,
With thy conquest-branded brow
Stooping to the slave of slaves
From thy throne, among the waves
Wilt thou be, when the sea-mew
Flies, as once before it flew,
O'er thine isles depopulate,
And all is in its ancient state,

Save where many a palace gate
With green sea-flowers overgrown
Like a rock of ocean's own,
Topples o'er the abandoned sea
As the tides change sullenly.
The fisher on his watery way,
Wandering at the close of day,
Will spread his sail and seize his oar
Till he pass the gloomy shore,
Lest thy dead should, from their sleep
Bursting o'er the starlight deep,
Lead a rapid masque of death
O'er the waters of his path.

Those who alone thy towers behold
Quivering through aërial gold,
As I now behold them here,
Would imagine not they were
Sepulchres, where human forms,
Like pollution-nourished worms
To the corpse of greatness cling,
Murdered, and now mouldering :
But if Freedom should awake
In her omnipotence, and shake
From the Celtic Anarch's hold
All the keys of dungeons cold,
Where a hundred cities lie
Chained like thee, ingloriously,
Thou and all thy sister band
Might adorn this sunny land,
Twining memories of old time
With new virtues more sublime ;
If not, perish thou and they,
Clouds which stain truth's rising day
By her sun consumed away,
Earth can spare ye : while like flowers,
In the waste of years and hours,

From your dust new nations spring
With more kindly blossoming.
Perish—let there only be
Floating o'er thy hearthless sea,
As the garment of thy sky
Clothes the world immortally,
One remembrance, more sublime
Than the tattered pall of time,
Which scarce hides thy visage wan ;—
That a tempest-cleaving Swan
Of the songs of Albion,
Driven from his ancestral streams
By the might of evil dreams,
Found a nest in thee ; and Ocean
Welcomed him with such emotion
That its joy grew his, and sprung
From his lips like music flung
O'er a mighty thunder-fit
Chastening terror :—what though yet
Poesy's unfailing River,
Which through Albion winds for ever
Lashing with melodious wave
Many a sacred Poet's grave,
Mourn its latest nursling fled ?
What though thou with all thy dead
Scarce can for this fame repay
Aught thine own ? oh, rather say
Though thy sins and slaveries foul
Overcloud a sunlike soul ?
As the ghost of Homer clings
Round Scamander's wasting springs ;
As divinest Shakespeare's might
Fills Avon and the world with light
Like omniscient power which he
Imaged 'mid mortality ;
As the love from Petrarch's urn,
Yet amid yon hills doth burn,

A quenchless lamp by which the heart
Sees things unearthly ;—so thou art,
Mighty spirit—so shall be
The City that did refuge thee.

Lo, the sun floats up the sky
Like thought-wingèd Liberty,
Till the universal light
Seems to level plain and height ;
From the sea a mist has spread,
And the beams of morn lie dead
On the towers of Venice now,
Like its glory long ago.
By the skirts of that grey cloud
Many-domèd Padua proud
Stands, a peopled solitude,
'Mid the harvest-shining plain,
Where the peasant heaps his grain
In the garner of his foe,
And the milk-white oxen slow
With the purple vintage strain,
Heaped upon the creaking wain,
That the brutal Celt may swill
Drunken sleep with savage will ;
And the sickle to the sword
Lies unchanged, though many a lord,
Like a weed whose shade is poison,
Overgrows this region's foison,
Sheaves of whom are ripe to come
To destruction's harvest home :
Men must reap the things they sow,
Force from force must ever flow,
Or worse ; but 'tis a bitter woe
That love or reason cannot change
The despot's rage, the slave's revenge.

Padua, thou within whose walls

Those mute guests at festivals,
 Son and Mother, Death and Sin,
 Played at dice for Ezzelin,
 Till Death cried, "I win, I win!"
 And Sin cursed to lose the wager,
 But Death promised, to assuage her,
 That he would petition for
 Her to be made Vice-Emperor,
 When the destined years were o'er
 Over all between the Po
 And the eastern Alpine snow,
 Under the mighty Austrian.
 Sin smiled so as Sin only can,
 And since that time, aye, long before,
 Both have ruled from shore to shore,
 That incestuous pair, who follow
 Tyrants as the sun the swallow,
 As Repentance follows Crime,
 And as changes follow Time.

In thine halls the lamp of learning,
 Padua, now no more is burning;
 Like a meteor, whose wild way
 Is lost over the grave of day,
 It gleams betrayed and to betray:
 Once remotest nations came
 To adore that sacred flame,
 When it lit not many a hearth
 On this cold and gloomy earth:
 Now new fires from antique light
 Spring beneath the wide world's might;
 But their spark lies dead in thee,
 Trampled out by tyranny.
 As the Norway woodman quells,
 In the depth of piny dells,
 One light flame among the brakes
 While the boundless forest shakes

And its mighty trunks are torn
By the fire thus lowly born :
The spark beneath his feet is dead,
He starts to see the flames it fed
Howling through the darkened sky
With a myriad tongues victoriously,
And sinks down in fear : so thou,
O Tyranny, beholdest now
Light around thee, and thou hearest
The loud flames ascend, and fearest :
Grovel on the earth : aye, hide
In the dust thy purple pride !

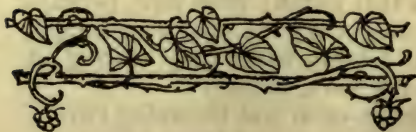
Noon descends around me now :
'Tis the noon of autumn's glow,
When a soft and purple mist
Like a vaporous amethyst,
Or an air-dissolvèd star
Mingling light and fragrance, far
From the curved horizon's bound
To the point of heaven's profound,
Fills the overflowing sky ;
And the plains that silent lie
Underneath, the leaves unsodden
Where the infant frost has trodden
With his morning-wingèd feet,
Whose bright print is gleaming yet ;
And the red and golden vines,
Piercing with their trellised lines
The rough, dark-skirted wilderness ;
The dun and bladed grass no less,
Pointing from this hoary tower
In the windless air ; the flower
Glimmering at my feet ; the line
Of the olive-sandalled Apennine
In the south dimly islanded ;
And the Alps, whose snows are spread

High between the clouds and sun ;
And of living things each one ;
And my spirit which so long
Darkened this swift stream of song,
Interpenetrated lie
By the glory of the sky :
Be it love, light, harmony,
Odour, or the soul of all
Which from heaven like dew doth fall,
Or the mind which feeds this verse
Peopling the lone universe.

Noon descends, and after noon
Autumn's evening meets me soon,
Leading the infantine moon,
And that one star, which to her
Almost seems to minister
Half the crimson light she brings
From the sunset's radiant springs :
And the soft dreams of the morn,
(Which like wingèd winds had borne
To that silent isle, which lies
'Mid remembered agonies,
The frail bark of this lone being,)
Pass, to other sufferers fleeing,
And its ancient pilot, Pain,
Sits beside the helm again.

Other flowering isles must be
In the sea of life and agony :
Other spirits float and flee
O'er that gulph : even now, perhaps,
On some rock the wild wave wraps,
With folding wings they waiting sit
For my bark, to pilot it
To some calm and blooming cove,
Where for me, and those I love,

May a windless bower be built,
Far from passion, pain, and guilt,
In a dell 'mid lawny hills,
Which the wild sea-murmur fills,
And soft sunshine, and the sound
Of old forests echoing round,
And the light and smell divine
Of all flowers that breathe and shine :
We may live so happy there,
That the spirits of the air,
Envyng us, may even entice
To our healing paradise
The polluting multitude ;
But their rage would be subdued
By that clime divine and calm,
And the winds whose wings rain balm
On the uplifted soul, and leaves
Under which the bright sea heaves ;
While each breathless interval
In their whisperings musical
The inspired soul supplies
With its own deep melodies,
And the love which heals all strife
Circling, like the breath of life,
All things in that sweet abode
With its own mild brotherhood :
They, not it, would change ; and soon
Every sprite beneath the moon
Would repent its envy vain,
And the earth grow young again.



STANZAS, WRITTEN IN DEJECTION NEAR
NAPLES

I

THE sun is warm, the sky is clear,
The waves are dancing fast and bright,
Blue isles and snowy mountains wear
The purple noon's transparent might,
The breath of the moist earth is light,
Around its unexpanded buds ;
Like many a voice of one delight,
The winds, the birds, the ocean floods,
The City's voice itself is soft like Solitude's.

II

I see the Deep's untrampled floor
With green and purple seaweeds strown ;
I see the waves upon the shore,
Like light dissolved in star-showers, thrown :
I sit upon the sands alone,
The lightning of the noon-tide ocean
Is flashing round me, and a tone
Arises from its measured motion,
How sweet ! did any heart now share in my emotion.

III

Alas ! I have nor hope nor health,
Nor peace within nor calm around,
Nor that content surpassing wealth
The sage in meditation found,
And walked with inward glory crowned—
Nor fame, nor power, nor love, nor leisure.
Others I see whom these surround—
Smiling they live, and call life pleasure ;—
To me that cup has been dealt in another measure.

IV

Yet now despair itself is mild,
Even as the winds and waters are ;
I could lie down like a tired child,
And weep away the life of care
Which I have borne and yet must bear,
Till death like sleep might steal on me,
And I might feel in the warm air
My cheek grow cold, and hear the sea
Breathe o'er my dying brain its last monotony.

V

Some might lament that I were cold,
As I, when this sweet day is gone,
Which my lost heart, too soon grown old,
Insults with this untimely moan ;
They might lament—for I am one
Whom men love not,—and yet regret,
Unlike this day, which, when the sun
Shall on its stainless glory set,
Will linger, though enjoyed, like joy in memory yet.



SONNET

LIFT not the painted veil which those who live
Call Life : though unreal shapes be pictured there,
And it but mimic all we would believe
With colours idly spread,—behind, lurk Fear
And Hope, twin destinies ; who ever weave
Their shadows, o'er the chasm, sightless and drear.
I knew one who had lifted it—he sought,
For his lost heart was tender, things to love,
But found them not, alas ! nor was there aught
The world contains, the which he could approve.
Through the unheeding many he did move,
A splendour among shadows, a bright blot
Upon this gloomy scene, a Spirit that strove
For truth, and like the Preacher found it not.

ODE TO THE WEST WIND

I

O, WILD West Wind, thou breath of Autumn's being,
Thou, from whose unseen presence the leaves dead
Are driven, like ghosts from an enchanter fleeing,

Yellow, and black, and pale, and hectic red,
Pestilence-stricken multitudes : O, thou,
Who chariotest to their dark wintry bed

The wingèd seeds, where they lie cold and low,
Each like a corpse within its grave, until
Thine azure sister of the spring shall blow

Her clarion o'er the dreaming earth, and fill
(Driving sweet buds like flocks to feed in air)
With living hues and odours plain and hill :

Wild Spirit, which art moving every where ;
Destroyer and preserver ; hear, O, hear !

II

Thou on whose stream, 'mid the steep sky's commotion,
Loose clouds like earth's decaying leaves are shed,
Shook from the tangled boughs of Heaven and Ocean,

Angels of rain and lightning : there are spread
On the blue surface of thine airy surge,
Like the bright hair uplifted from the head

Of some fierce Maenad, even from the dim verge
Of the horizon to the zenith's height
The locks of the approaching storm. Thou dirge

Of the dying year, to which this closing night
Will be the dome of a vast sepulchre,
Vaulted with all thy congregated might

Of vapours, from whose solid atmosphere
Black rain, and fire, and hail will burst : O, hear !

III

Thou who didst waken from his summer dreams
The blue Mediterranean, where he lay,
Lulled by the coil of his crystalline streams,

Beside a pumice isle in Baiae's bay,
And saw in sleep old palaces and towers
Quivering within the wave's intenser day,

All overgrown with azure moss and flowers
So sweet, the sense faints picturing them ! Thou
For whose path the Atlantic's level powers

Cleave themselves into chasms, while far below
The sea-blooms and the oozy woods which wear
The sapless foliage of the ocean, know

Thy voice, and suddenly grow grey with fear,
And tremble and despoil themselves : O, hear !

IV

If I were a dead leaf thou mightest bear ;
If I were a swift cloud to fly with thee ;
A wave to pant beneath thy power, and share

The impulse of thy strength, only less free
Than thou, O, uncontrollable ! If even
I were as in my boyhood, and could be

The comrade of thy wanderings over heaven,
As then, when to outstrip thy skiey speed
Scarce seemed a vision ; I would ne'er have striven

As thus with thee in prayer in my sore need.
Oh ! lift me as a wave, a leaf, a cloud !
I fall upon the thorns of life ! I bleed !

A heavy weight of hours has chained and bowed
One too like thee : tameless, and swift, and proud.

V

Make me thy lyre, even as the forest is :
What if my leaves are falling like its own !
The tumult of thy mighty harmonies

Will take from both a deep, autumnal tone,
Sweet though in sadness. Be thou, spirit fierce,
My spirit! Be thou me, impetuous one!

Drive my dead thoughts over the universe
Like withered leaves to quicken a new birth!
And, by the incantation of this verse,

Scatter, as from an unextinguished hearth
Ashes and sparks, my words among mankind!
Be through my lips to unawakened earth

The trumpet of a prophecy! O, wind,
If Winter comes, can Spring be far behind?





THE SENSITIVE PLANT

PART FIRST

A SENSITIVE Plant in a garden grew,
And the young winds fed it with silver dew,
And it opened its fan-like leaves to the light,
And closed them beneath the kisses of night.

And the Spring arose on the garden fair,
Like the Spirit of Love felt every where ;
And each flower and herb on Earth's dark breast
Rose from the dreams of its wintry rest.

But none ever trembled and panted with bliss
In the garden, the field, or the wilderness,
Like a doe in the noon-tide with love's sweet want,
As the companionless Sensitive Plant.

The snow-drop, and then the violet,
Arose from the ground with warm rain wet,
And their breath was mixed with fresh odour, sent
From the turf, like the voice and the instrument.

Then the pied wind-flowers and the tulip tall,
And narcissi, the fairest among them all,
Who gaze on their eyes in the stream's recess,
Till they die of their own dear loveliness ;

And the Naiad-like lily of the vale,
Whom youth makes so fair and passion so pale,
That the light of its tremulous bells is seen
Through their pavilions of tender green ;

And the hyacinth purple, and white, and blue,
Which flung from its bells a sweet peal anew
Of music so delicate, soft, and intense,
It was felt like an odour within the sense ;

And the rose like a nymph to the bath addressed,
Which unveiled the depth of her glowing breast,
Till, fold after fold, to the fainting air
The soul of her beauty and love lay bare :

And the wand-like lily, which lifted up,
As a Maenad, its moonlight-coloured cup,
Till the fiery star, which is its eye,
Gazed through clear dew on the tender sky ;

And the jessamine faint, and the sweet tuberose,
The sweetest flower for scent that blows ;
And all rare blossoms from every clime
Grew in that garden in perfect prime.

And on the stream whose inconstant bosom
Was pranked under boughs of embowering blossom,
With golden and green light, slanting through
Their heaven of many a tangled hue,

Broad water lilies lay tremulously,
And starry river-buds glimmered by,

And around them the soft stream did glide and dance
With a motion of sweet sound and radiance.

And the sinuous paths of lawn and of moss,
Which led through the garden along and across,
Some open at once to the sun and the breeze,
Some lost among bowers of blossoming trees,

Were all paved with daisies and delicate bells
As fair as the fabulous asphodels,
And flowrets which drooping as day drooped too
Fell into pavilions, white, purple, and blue,
To roof the glow-worm from the evening dew

And from this undefiled Paradise
The flowers (as an infant's awakening eyes
Smile on its mother, whose singing sweet
Can first lull, and at last must awaken it),

When Heaven's blithe winds had unfolded them,
As mine-lamps enkindle a hidden gem,
Shone smiling to Heaven, and every one
Shared joy in the light of the gentle sun ;

For each one was interpenetrated
With the light and the odour its neighbour shed,
Like young lovers whom youth and love make dear
Wrapped and filled by their mutual atmosphere.

But the Sensitive Plant, which could give small fruit
Of the love which it felt from the leaf to the root,
Received more than all,—it loved more than ever,
Where none wanted but it, could belong to the giver :

For the Sensitive Plant has no bright flower ;
Radiance and odour are not its dower ;
It loves, even like Love ; its deep heart is full ;
It desires what it has not, the beautiful !

The light winds which from unsustaining wings
Shed the music of many murmurings ;
The beams which dart from many a star
Of the flowers whose hues they bear afar ;

The plumèd insects swift and free,
Like golden boats on a sunny sea,
Laden with light and odour, which pass
Over the gleam of the living grass ;

The unseen clouds of the dew, which lie
Like fire in the flowers till the sun rides high,
Then wander like spirits among the spheres,
Each cloud faint with the fragrance it bears ;

The quivering vapours of dim noontide,
Which like a sea o'er the warm earth glide,
In which every sound, and odour, and beam,
Move, as reeds in a single stream ;

Each and all like ministering angels were
For the Sensitive Plant sweet joy to bear,
Whilst the lagging hours of the day went by
Like windless clouds o'er a tender sky.

And when evening descended from heaven above,
And the Earth was all rest, and the air was all love,
And delight, though less bright, was far more deep,
And the day's veil fell from the world of sleep,

And the beasts, and the birds, and the insects were
drowned
In an ocean of dreams without a sound ;
Whose waves never mark, though they ever impress
The light sand which paves it, consciousness ;

(Only over head the sweet nightingale
Ever sang more sweet as the day might fail,

And snatches of its Elysian chant
Were mixed with the dreams of the Sensitive Plant.)

The Sensitive Plant was the earliest
Up-gathered into the bosom of rest ;
A sweet child weary of its delight,
The feeblest and yet the favourite,
Cradled within the embrace of night.

PART SECOND

There was a Power in this sweet place,
An Eve in this Eden ; a ruling grace
Which to the flowers, did they waken or dream,
Was as God is to the starry scheme.

A Lady, the wonder of her kind,
Whose form was upborne by a lovely mind
Which, dilating, had moulded her mien and motion
Like a sea-flower unfolded beneath the ocean,

Tended the garden from morn to even :
And the meteors of that sublunar heaven,
Like the lamps of the air when night walks forth,
Laughed round her footsteps up from the Earth !

She had no companion of mortal race,
But her tremulous breath and her flushing face
Told, whilst the morn kissed the sleep from her eyes,
That her dreams were less slumber than Paradise :

As if some bright Spirit for her sweet sake
Had deserted heaven while the stars were awake,
As if yet around her he lingering were,
Though the veil of daylight concealed him from her.

Her step seemed to pity the grass it pressed ;
You might hear by the heaving of her breast,

That the coming and going of the wind
Brought pleasure there and left passion behind.

And wherever her airy footsteps trod,
Her trailing hair from the grassy sod
Erased its light vestige, with shadowy sweep,
Like a sunny storm o'er the dark green deep.

I doubt not the flowers of that garden sweet
Rejoiced in the sound of her gentle feet ;
I doubt not they felt the spirit that came
From her glowing fingers through all their frame.

She sprinkled bright water from the stream
On those that were faint with the sunny beam ;
And out of the cups of the heavy flowers
She emptied the rain of the thunder showers.

She lifted their heads with her tender hands,
And sustained them with rods and ozier bands ;
If the flowers had been her own infants she
Could never have nursed them more tenderly.

And all killing insects and gnawing worms,
And things of obscene and unlovely forms,
She bore in a basket of Indian woof,
Into the rough woods far aloof,

In a basket, of grasses and wild flowers full,
The freshest her gentle hands could pull
For the poor banished insects, whose intent,
Although they did ill, was innocent.

But the bee and the beamlike ephemeris
Whose path is the lightning's, and soft moths that kiss
The sweet lips of the flowers, and harm not, did she
Make her attendant angels be.

And many an antenatal tomb,
Where butterflies dream of the life to come,
She left clinging round the smooth and dark
Edge of the odorous cedar bark.

This fairest creature from earliest spring
Thus moved through the garden ministering
All the sweet season of summer tide,
And ere the first leaf looked brown—she died !

PART THIRD

Three days the flowers of the garden fair
Like stars when the moon is awakened were,
Or the waves of Baiae, ere luminous
She floats up through the smoke of Vesuvius.

And on the fourth, the Sensitive Plant
Felt the sound of the funeral chaunt,
And the steps of the bearers, heavy and slow,
And the sobs of the mourners deep and low ;

The weary sound and the heavy breath,
And the silent motions of passing death,
And the smell, cold, oppressive, and dank,
Sent through the pores of the coffin plank ;

The dark grass, and the flowers among the grass,
Were bright with tears as the crowd did pass ;
From their sighs the wind caught a mournful tone,
And sate in the pines, and gave groan for groan.

The garden, once fair, became cold and foul,
Like the corpse of her who had been its soul,
Which at first was lovely as if in sleep,
Then slowly changed, till it grew a heap
To make men tremble who never weep.

Swift summer into the autumn flowed,
And frost in the mist of morning rode,
Though the noonday sun looked clear and bright,
Mocking the spoil of the secret night.

The rose leaves, like flakes of crimson snow,
Paved the turf and the moss below.
The lilies were drooping, and white, and wan,
Like the head and the skin of a dying man.

And Indian plants, of scent and hue
The sweetest that ever were fed on dew,
Leaf by leaf, day after day,
Were massed into the common clay.

And the leaves, brown, yellow, and grey, and red,
And white with the whiteness of what is dead,
Like troops of ghosts on the dry wind passed ;
Their whistling noise made the birds aghast.

And the gusty winds waked the wingèd seeds,
Out of their birthplace of ugly weeds,
Till they clung round many a sweet flower's stem,
Which rotted into the earth with them.

The water-blooms under the rivulet
Fell from the stalks on which they were set ;
And the eddies drove them here and there,
As the winds did those of the upper air.

Then the rain came down, and the broken stalks
Were bent and tangled across the walks ;
And the leafless net-work of parasite bowers
Massed into ruin ; and all sweet flowers.

Between the time of the wind and the snow,
All loathliest weeds began to grow,

Whose coarse leaves were splashed with many a speck,
Like the water-snake's belly and the toad's back.

And thistles, and nettles, and darnels rank,
And the dock, and henbane, and hemlock dank,
Stretched out its long and hollow shank,
And stifled the air till the dead wind stank.

And plants, at whose names the verse feels loath,
Filled the place with a monstrous undergrowth,
Prickly, and pulpous, and blistering, and blue,
Livid, and starred with a lurid dew.

And agarics, and fungi, with mildew and mould
Started like mist from the wet ground cold ;
Pale, fleshy, as if the decaying dead
With a spirit of growth had been animated !

Spawn, weeds, and filth, a leprous scum,
Made the running rivulet thick and dumb
And at its outlet flags huge as stakes
Dammed it up with roots knotted like water-snakes.

And hour by hour, when the air was still,
The vapours arose which have strength to kill :
At morn they were seen, at noon they were felt,
At night they were darkness no star could melt.

And unctuous meteors from spray to spray
Crept and flitted in broad noon-day
Unseen ; every branch on which they alit
By a venomous blight was burned and bit.

The Sensitive Plant like one forbid
Wept, and the tears within each lid
Of its folded leaves which together grew
Were changed to a blight of frozen glue.

For the leaves soon fell, and the branches soon
By the heavy axe of the blast were hewn ;
The sap shrank to the root through every pore
As blood to a heart that will beat no more.

For Winter came : the wind was his whip :
One choppy finger was on his lip :
He had torn the cataracts from the hills
And they clanked at his girdle like manacles ;

His breath was a chain which without a sound
The earth, and the air, and the water bound ;
He came, fiercely driven, in his chariot-throne,
By the tenfold blasts of the arctic zone.

Then the weeds which were forms of living death
Fled from the frost to the earth beneath.
Their decay and sudden flight from frost
Was but like the vanishing of a ghost !

And under the roots of the Sensitive Plant
The moles and the dormice died for want :
The birds dropped stiff from the frozen air
And were caught in the branches naked and bare.

First there came down a thawing rain
And its dull drops froze on the boughs again ;
Then there steamed up a freezing dew
Which to the drops of the thaw-rain grew ;

And a northern whirlwind, wandering about
Like a wolf that had smelt a dead child out,
Shook the boughs thus laden, and heavy and stiff,
And snapped them off with his rigid griff.

When winter had gone and spring came back
The Sensitive Plant was a leafless wreck ;

But the mandrakes, and toadstools, and docks, and
darnels,
Rose like the dead from their ruined charnels.

CONCLUSION

Whether the Sensitive Plant, or that
Which within its boughs like a spirit sat
Ere its outward form had known decay,
Now felt this change, I cannot say.

Whether that Lady's gentle mind,
No longer with the form combined
Which scattered love, as stars do light,
Found sadness, where it left delight,

I dare not guess ; but in this life
Of error, ignorance, and strife,
Where nothing is, but all things seem,
And we the shadows of the dream,

It is a modest creed, and yet
Pleasant if one considers it,
To own that death itself must be,
Like all the rest, a mockery.

That garden sweet, that Lady fair,
And all sweet shapes and odours there,
In truth have never passed away :
'Tis we, 'tis ours, are changed ; not they.

For love, and beauty, and delight,
There is no death nor change : their might
Exceeds our organs, which endure
No light, being themselves obscure.



I BRING fresh showers for the thirsting flowers,
From the seas and the streams ;
I bear light shade for the leaves when laid
In their noon-day dreams.
From my wings are shaken the dews that waken
The sweet buds every one,
When rocked to rest on their mother's breast,
As she dances about the sun.
I wield the flail of the lashing hail,
And whiten the green plains under,
And then again I dissolve it in rain,
And laugh as I pass in thunder.

I sift the snow on the mountains below,
And their great pines groan aghast ;
And all the night 'tis my pillow white,
While I sleep in the arms of the blast.
Sublime on the towers of my skiey bowers,
Lightning my pilot sits ;
In a cavern under is fettered the thunder,
It struggles and howls at fits ;
Over earth and ocean, with gentle motion,
This pilot is guiding me,
Lured by the love of the genii that move
In the depths of the purple sea ;
Over the rills, and the crags, and the hills,
Over the lakes and the plains,



THE CLOUD



Wherever he dream, under mountain or stream,
The Spirit he loves remains ;
And I all the while bask in heaven's blue smile,
Whilst he is dissolving in rains.

The sanguine sunrise, with his meteor eyes,
And his burning plumes outspread,
Leaps on the back of my sailing rack,
When the morning star shines dead,
As on the jag of a mountain crag,
Which an earthquake rocks and swings,
An eagle alit one moment may sit
In the light of its golden wings.
And when sunset may breathe, from the lit sea beneath,
Its ardours of rest and of love,
And the crimson pall of eve may fall
From the depth of heaven above,
With wings folded I rest, on mine airy nest,
As still as a brooding dove.

That orbèd maiden with white fire laden,
Whom mortals call the moon,
Glides glimmering o'er my fleece-like floor,
By the midnight breezes strewn ;
And wherever the beat of her unseen feet,
Which only the angels hear,
May have broken the woof of my tent's thin roof,
The stars peep behind her and peer ;
And I laugh to see them whirl and flee,
Like a swarm of golden bees,
When I widen the rent in my wind-built tent,
Till the calm rivers, lakes, and seas,
Like strips of the sky fallen through me on high,
Are each paved with the moon and these.

I bind the sun's throne with the burning zone,
And the moon's with a girdle of pearl ;

The volcanos are dim, and the stars reel and swim,
When the whirlwinds my banner unfurl.
From cape to cape, with a bridge-like shape,
Over a torrent sea,
Sunbeam-proof, I hang like a roof,
The mountains its columns be.
The triumphal arch through which I march
With hurricane, fire, and snow,
When the powers of the air are chained to my chair,
Is the million-coloured bow ;
The sphere-fire above its soft colours wove,
While the moist earth was laughing below.

I am the daughter of earth and water,
And the nursling of the sky ;
I pass through the pores of the ocean and shores ;
I change, but I cannot die.
For after the rain when, with never a stain,
The pavilion of heaven is bare,
And the winds and sunbeams with their convex gleams
Build up the blue dome of air,
I silently laugh at my own cenotaph,
And out of the caverns of rain,
Like a child from the womb, like a ghost from the tomb,
I arise and unbuild it again.





HAIL to thee, blithe spirit !
Bird thou never wert,
That from heaven, or near it,
Pourest thy full heart
In profuse strains of unpremeditated art.

Higher still and higher
From the earth thou springest
Like a cloud of fire ;
The blue deep thou wingest,
And singing still dost soar, and soaring ever singest.

In the golden lightning
Of the sunken sun,
O'er which the clouds are brightning,
Thou dost float and run ;
Like an unbodied joy whose race is just begun.

The pale purple even
Melts around thy flight ;
Like a star of heaven
In the broad day-light
Thou art unseen, but yet I hear thy shrill delight,

Keen as are the arrows
Of that silver sphere,
Whose intense lamp narrows
In the white dawn clear,
Until we hardly see, we feel that it is there.

All the earth and air
With thy voice is loud,
As, when night is bare,
From one lonely cloud
The moon rains out her beams, and heaven is overflowed.

What thou art we know not ;
What is most like thee ?
From rainbow clouds there flow not
Drops so bright to see
As from thy presence showers a rain of melody.

Like a poet hidden
In the light of thought,
Singing hymns unbidden,
Till the world is wrought
To sympathy with hopes and fears it heeded not :

Like a high-born maiden
In a palace tower,
Soothing her love-laden
Soul in secret hour
With music sweet as love, which overflows her bower :

Like a glow-worm golden
In a dell of dew,
Scattering unbeholden
Its aërial hue
Among the flowers and grass which screen it from the
view :

Like a rose embowered
In its own green leaves,
By warm winds deflowered,
Till the scent it gives
Makes faint with too much sweet these heavy-wingèd
thieves.

Sound of vernal showers
On the twinkling grass,
Rain-awakened flowers,
All that ever was
Joyous, and clear, and fresh, thy music doth surpass.

Teach us, sprite or bird,
What sweet thoughts are thine ;
I have never heard
Praise of love or wine
That panted forth a flood of rapture so divine :

Chorus Hymenaeal,
Or triumphal chaunt,
Matched with thine, would be all
But an empty vaunt,
A thing wherein we feel there is some hidden want.

What objects are the fountains
Of thy happy strain ?
What fields, or waves, or mountains ?
What shapes of sky or plain ?
What love of thine own kind ? what ignorance of pain ?

With thy clear keen joyance
Languor cannot be :
Shadow of annoyance
Never came near thee :
Thou lovest ; but ne'er knew love's sad satiety.

Waking or asleep,
Thou of death must deem
Things more true and deep
Than we mortals dream,
Or how could thy notes flow in such a crystal stream ?

We look before and after
And pine for what is not :
Our sincerest laughter
With some pain is fraught ;
Our sweetest songs are those that tell of saddest thought.

Yet if we could scorn
Hate, and pride, and fear ;
If we were things born
Not to shed a tear,
I know not how thy joy we ever should come near.

Better than all measures
Of delightful sound,
Better than all treasures
That in books are found,
Thy skill to poet were, thou scorner of the ground !

Teach me half the gladness
That thy brain must know,
Such harmonious madness
From my lips would flow,
The world should listen then, as I am listening now.



ARETHUSA arose
From her couch of snows
In the Acroceraunian mountains,—
From cloud and from crag,
With many a jag,
Shepherding her bright fountains.
She leapt down the rocks,
With her rainbow locks
Streaming among the streams ;—
Her steps paved with green
The downward ravine
Which slopes to the western gleams :
And gliding and springing
She went, ever singing,
In murmurs as soft as sleep ;
The Earth seemed to love her,
And Heaven smiled above her,
As she lingered towards the deep.

Then Alpheus bold,
On his glacier cold,
With his trident the mountains strook
And opened a chasm
In the rocks ;—with the spasm
All Erymanthus shook.
And the black south wind
It concealed behind
The urns of the silent snow,
And earthquake and thunder
Did rend in sunder
The bars of the springs below :
The beard and the hair
Of the River-god were
Seen through the torrent's sweep,
As he followed the light
Of the fleet nymph's flight
To the brink of the Dorian deep.

“ Oh, save me ! Oh, guide me !
And bid the deep hide me,
For he grasps me now by the hair ! ”
The loud Ocean heard,
To its blue depth stirred,
And divided at her prayer ;
And under the water
The Earth's white daughter
Fled like a sunny beam ;
Behind her descended
Her billows, unblended
With the brackish Dorian stream :—
Like a gloomy stain
On the emerald main
Alpheus rushed behind,—
As an eagle pursuing
A dove to its ruin
Down the streams of the cloudy wind.



Under the bowers
Where the Ocean Powers
Sit on their pearlèd thrones,
Through the coral woods
Of the weltering floods,
Over heaps of unvalued stones ;
Through the dim beams
Which amid the streams
Weave a net-work of coloured light ;
And under the caves,
Where the shadowy waves
Are as green as the forest's night :—
Outspeeding the shark
And the sword-fish dark,
Under the ocean foam,
And up through the rifts
Of the mountain clifts
They passed to their Dorian home.

And now from their fountains
In Enna's mountains,
Down one vale where the morning basks,
Like friends once parted
Grown single-hearted,
They ply their watery tasks.
At sunrise they leap
From their cradles steep
In the cave of the shelving hill ;
At noon-tide they flow
Through the woods below
And the meadows of Asphodel ;
And at night they sleep
In the rocking deep
Beneath the Ortygian shore ;—
Like spirits that lie
In the azure sky
When they love but live no more.

HYMN OF APOLLO

I

THE sleepless Hours who watch me as I lie,
Curtained with star-inwoven tapestries,
From the broad moonlight of the sky,
Fanning the busy dreams from my dim eyes,—
Waken me when their Mother, the grey Dawn,
Tells them that dreams and that the moon is gone.

II

Then I arise, and climbing Heaven's blue dome,
I walk over the mountains and the waves,
Leaving my robe upon the ocean foam ;
My footsteps pave the clouds with fire ; the caves
Are filled with my bright presence, and the air
Leaves the green earth to my embraces bare.

III

The sunbeams are my shafts, with which I kill
Deceit, that loves the night and fears the day ;
All men who do or even imagine ill
Fly me, and from the glory of my ray
Good minds and open actions take new might,
Until diminished by the reign of night.

IV

I feed the clouds, the rainbows and the flowers
With their aetherial colours ; the Moon's globe
And the pure stars in their eternal bowers
Are cinctured with my power as with a robe ;
Whatever lamps on Earth or Heaven may shine,
Are portions of one power, which is mine.

V

I stand at noon upon the peak of Heaven,
Then with unwilling steps I wander down
Into the clouds of the Atlantic even ;
For grief that I depart they weep and frown :
What look is more delightful than the smile
With which I soothe them from the western isle ?

VI

I am the eye with which the Universe
Beholds itself and knows itself divine ;
All harmony of instrument or verse,
All prophecy, all medicine are mine,
All light of art or nature ;—to my song,
Victory and praise in their own right belong.





I

FROM the forests and highlands
We come, we come ;
From the river-girt islands,
Where loud waves are dumb
Listening to my sweet pipings.
The wind in the reeds and the rushes,
The bees on the bells of thyme
The birds on the myrtle bushes,
The cicale above in the lime,
And the lizards below in the grass,
Were as silent as ever old Tmolus was,
Listening to my sweet pipings.

II

Liquid Peneus was flowing,
And all dark Tempe lay





In Pelion's shadow, outgrowing
The light of the dying day,
SPEEDED by my sweet pipings.
The Sileni, and Sylvans, and Fauns,
And the Nymphs of the woods and waves,
To the edge of the moist river-lawns,
And the brink of the dewy caves,
And all that did then attend and follow
Were silent with love, as you now, Apollo,
With envy of my sweet pipings.

III

I sang of the dancing stars,
I sang of the daedal Earth,
And of Heaven—and the giant wars,
And Love, and Death, and Birth,—
And then I changed my pipings,—
Singing how down the vale of Menalus
I pursued a maiden and clasped a reed :
Gods and men, we are all deluded thus !
It breaks in our bosom and then we bleed :
All wept, as I think both ye now would,
If envy or age had not frozen your blood,
At the sorrow of my sweet pipings.

THE QUESTION

I

I DREAMED that, as I wandered by the way,
Bare winter suddenly was changed to spring,
And gentle odours led my steps astray,
Mixed with a sound of waters murmuring
Along a shelving bank of turf, which lay
Under a copse, and hardly dared to fling
Its green arms round the bosom of the stream,
But kissed it and then fled, as thou mightest in dream

II

There grew pied wind-flowers and violets,
Daisies, those pearled Arcturi of the earth,
The constellated flower that never sets ;
Faint oxlips ; tender bluebells, at whose birth
The sod scarce heaved ; and that tall flower that wets
(Like a child, half in tenderness and mirth)
Its mother's face with heaven-collected tears,
When the low wind, its playmate's voice, it hears.

III

And in the warm hedge grew lush eglantine,
Green cowbind and the moonlight-coloured May,
And cherry-blossoms, and white cups, whose wine
Was the bright dew, yet drained not by the day ;
And wild roses, and ivy serpentine,
With its dark buds and leaves, wandering astray ;
And flowers azure, black, and streaked with gold,
Fairer than any wakened eyes behold.

IV

And nearer to the river's trembling edge
There grew broad flag-flowers, purple pranked with white,
And starry river-buds among the sedge,
And floating water-lilies, broad and bright,
Which lit the oak that overhung the hedge
With moonlight beams of their own watery light ;
And bulrushes and reeds of such deep green
As soothed the dazzled eye with sober sheen.

V

Methought that of these visionary flowers
I made a nosegay, bound in such a way
That the same hues, which in their natural bowers
Were mingled or opposed, the like array
Kept these imprisoned children of the Hours
Within my hand,—and then, elate and gay,
I hastened to the spot whence I had come,
That I might there present it !—oh ! to whom ?



THE TWO SPIRITS: AN ALLEGORY

FIRST SPIRIT

O THOU, who plumed with strong desire
Wouldst float above the earth, beware!
A Shadow tracks thy flight of fire—
Night is coming!
Bright are the regions of the air,
And among the winds and beams
It were delight to wander there—
Night is coming!

SECOND SPIRIT

The deathless stars are bright above;
If I would cross the shade of night,

Within my heart is the lamp of love,
And that is day !
And the moon will smile with gentle light
On my golden plumes where'er they move ;
The meteors will linger round my flight,
And make night day.

FIRST SPIRIT

But if the whirlwinds of darkness waken
Hail, and lightning, and stormy rain ;
See, the bounds of the air are shaken—
Night is coming !
The red swift clouds of the hurricane
Yon declining sun have overtaken,
The clash of the hail sweeps over the plain—
Night is coming !

SECOND SPIRIT

I see the light, and I hear the sound ;
I'll sail on the flood of the tempest dark,
With the calm within and the light around
Which makes night day :
And thou, when the gloom is deep and stark,
Look from thy dull earth, slumber-bound,
My moon-light flight thou then mayst mark
On high, far away.

Some say there is a precipice
Where one vast pine is frozen to ruin
O'er piles of snow and chasms of ice
'Mid Alpine mountains ;
And that the languid storm pursuing
That wingèd shape, for ever flies
Round those hoar branches, aye renewing
Its aëry fountains.

Some say when nights are dry and clear,
And the death-dews sleep on the morass,
Sweet whispers are heard by the traveller,
Which make night day :
And a silver shape like his early love doth pass
Upborne by her wild and glittering hair,
And when he awakes on the fragrant grass,
He finds night day.





ODE TO NAPLES

EPODE I *α*

I STOOD within the city disinterred,
And heard the autumnal leaves like light footfalls
Of spirits passing through the streets, and heard
The Mountain's slumberous voice at intervals
Thrill through those roofless halls ;
The oracular thunder penetrating shook
The listening soul in my suspended blood ;
I felt that Earth out of her deep heart spoke—
I felt, but heard not :—through white columns glowed
The isle-sustaining Ocean-flood,
A plane of light between two Heavens of azure :
Around me gleamed many a bright sepulchre
Of whose pure beauty, Time, as if his pleasure
Were to spare Death, had never made erasure ;

But every living lineament was clear
As in the sculptor's thought ; and there
The wreaths of stony myrtle, ivy and pine,
Like winter leaves o'ergrown by moulded snow,
Seemed only not to move and grow
Because the crystal silence of the air
Weighed on their life ; even as the Power divine
Which then lulled all things brooded upon mine.

EPODE II α

Then gentle winds arose
With many a mingled close
Of wild Aeolian sound and mountain-odour keen ;
And where the Baian ocean
Welters with air-like motion
Within, above, around its bowers of starry green,
Moving the sea-flowers in those purple caves
Even as the ever stormless atmosphere
Floats o'er the Elysian realm,
It bore me like an Angel, o'er the waves
Of sunlight, whose swift pinnacle of dewy air
No storm can overwhelm ;
I sailed, where ever flows
Under the calm Serene
A spirit of deep emotion
From the unknown graves
Of the dead kings of Melody.
Shadowy Aornos darkened o'er the helm
The horizontal aether ! heaven stripped bare
Its depths over Elysium, where the prow
Made the invisible water white as snow ;
From that Typhaean mount, Inarime,
There streamed a sunlight vapour, like the standard
Of some aetherial host ;
Whilst from all the coast,
Louder and louder, gathering round, there wandered
Over the oracular woods and divine sea

Prophecyings which grew articulate—
 They seize me—I must speak them—be they fate!

STROPHE α 1

Naples! thou Heart of men which ever pantest
 Naked, beneath the lidless eye of heaven!
 Elysian City which to calm enchantest
 The mutinous air and sea: they round thee, even
 As sleep round Love, are driven!
 Metropolis of a ruined Paradise
 Long lost, late won, and yet but half regained!
 Bright Altar of the bloodless sacrifice,
 Which armed Victory offers up unstained
 To Love, the flower-enchained!
 Thou which wert once, and then didst cease to be,
 Now art, and henceforth ever shalt be, free,
 If Hope, and Truth, and Justice can avail,
 Hail, hail, all hail!

STROPHE β 2

Thou youngest giant birth
 Which from the groaning earth
 Leap'st, clothed in armour of impenetrable scale!
 Last of the Intercessors!
 Who 'gainst the Crowned Transgressors
 Pleadest before God's love! Arrayed in Wisdom's mail,
 Wave thy lightning lance in mirth,
 Nor let thy high heart fail,
 Though from their hundred gates the leagued Oppressors,
 With hurried legends move!
 Hail, hail, all hail!

ANTISTROPHE α

What though Cimmerian Anarchs dare blaspheme
 Freedom and thee? thy shield is as a mirror
 To make their blind slaves see, and with fierce gleam
 To turn his hungry sword upon the wearer
 A new Actaeon's error

Shall theirs have been—devoured by their own hounds!

Be thou like the imperial Basilisk

Killing thy foe with unapparent wounds!

Gaze on oppression, till at that dread risk

Aghast she pass from the Earth's disk:

Fear not, but gaze—for freemen mightier grow,

And slaves more feeble, gazing on their foe;

If Hope and Truth and Justice may avail,

Thou shalt be great.—All hail!

ANTISTROPHE β 2

From Freedom's form divine,

From Nature's inmost shrine,

Strip every impious gawd, rend Error veil by veil:

O'er Ruin desolate,

O'er Falsehood's fallen state,

Sit thou sublime, unawed; be the Destroyer pale!

And equal laws be thine,

And wingèd words let sail,

Freighted with truth even from the throne of God:

That wealth, surviving fate,

Be thine.—All hail.

ANTISTROPHE α γ

Didst thou not start to hear Spain's thrilling paeon

From land to land re-echoed solemnly,

Till silence became music? From the Aeaeon

To the cold Alps, eternal Italy

Starts to hear thine! The Sea

Which paves the desert streets of Venice laughs

In light and music; widowed Genoa wan

By moonlight spells ancestral epitaphs,

Murmuring, where is Doria? fair Milan,

Within whose veins long ran

The viper's palsying venom, lifts her heel

To bruise his head. The signal and the seal

(If Hope and Truth and Justice can avail)

Art Thou of all these hopes.—O hail!

ANTISTROPHE β γ

Florence! beneath the sun,
 Of cities fairest one,
 Blushes within her bower for Freedom's expectation :
 From eyes of quenchless hope
 Rome tears the priestly cope,
 As ruling once by power, so now by admiration,
 As athlete stripped to run
 From a remoter station
 For the high prize lost on Philippi's shore :—
 As then Hope, Truth, and Justice did avail,
 So now may Fraud and Wrong! O hail!

EPODE I β

Hear ye the march as of the Earth-born Forms
 Arrayed against the ever-living Gods?
 The crash and darkness of a thousand storms
 Bursting their inaccessible abodes
 Of crags and thunder-clouds?
 See ye the banners blazoned to the day,
 Inwrought with emblems of barbaric pride?
 Dissonant threats kill Silence far away;
 The serene Heaven which wraps our Eden wide
 With iron light is dyed;
 The Anarchs of the North lead forth their legions
 Like Chaos o'er creation, uncreating;
 An hundred tribes nourished on strange religions
 And lawless slaveries,—down the ærial regions
 Of the white Alps, desolating,
 Famished wolves that bide no waiting,
 Blotting the glowing footsteps of old glory,
 Trampling our columned cities into dust,
 Their dull and savage lust
 On Beauty's corse to sickness satiating—
 They come! The fields they tread look black and hoary
 With fire—from their red feet the streams run gory!

EPODE II β

Great Spirit, deepest Love!
 Which rulest and dost move
 All things which live and are, within the Italian shore;
 Who spreadest heaven around it,
 Whose woods, rocks, waves, surround it,
 Who sittest in thy star, o'er Ocean's western floor;
 Spirit of beauty! at whose soft command
 The sunbeams and the showers distil its foison
 From the Earth's bosom chill;
 O bid those beams be each a blinding brand
 Of lightning! bid those showers be dews of poison!
 Bid the Earth's plenty kill!
 Bid thy bright Heaven above,
 Whilst light and darkness bound it,
 Be their tomb who planned
 To make it ours and thine!
 Or, with thine harmonizing ardours fill
 And raise thy sons, as o'er the prone horizon
 Thy lamp feeds every twilight wave with fire—
 Be man's high hope and unextinct desire
 The instrument to work thy will divine!
 Then clouds from sunbeams, antelopes from leopards,
 And frowns and fears from Thee,
 Would not more swiftly flee
 Than Celtic wolves from the Ausonian shepherds.—
 Whatever, Spirit, from thy starry shrine
 Thou yieldest or withholdest, Oh let be
 This city of thy worship ever free!



LINES FROM "FIORDISPINA"

THE season was the childhood of sweet June,
 Whose sunny hours from morning until noon
 Went creeping through the day with silent feet,
 Each with its load of pleasure, slow yet sweet ;
 Like the long years of blessed Eternity
 Never to be developed. Joy to thee,
 Fiordispina and thy Cosimo,
 For thou the wonders of the depth canst know
 Of this unfathomable flood of hours,
 Sparkling beneath the heaven which embowers—

* * * * *

They were two cousins, almost like to twins,
 Except that from the catalogue of sins
 Nature had rased their love—which could not be
 But by dissevering their nativity.
 And so they grew together like two flowers
 Upon one stem, which the same beams and showers
 Lull or awaken in their purple prime,
 Which the same hand will gather—the same clime
 Shake with decay. This fair day smiles to see
 All those who love—and who e'er loved like thee,
 Fiordispina? Scarcely Cosimo,
 Within whose bosom and whose brain now glow
 The ardours of a vision which obscure
 The very idol of its portraiture.
 He faints, dissolved into a sea of love ;
 But thou art as a planet sphered above ;
 But thou art Love itself—ruling the motion
 Of his subjected spirit : such emotion
 Must end in sin and sorrow, if sweet May
 Had not brought forth this morn—your wedding-day.



TO JANE—THE INVITATION

BEST and brightest, come away !
Fairer far than this fair Day,
Which, like thee to those in sorrow,
Comes to bid a sweet good-morrow
To the rough Year just awake
In its cradle on the brake.
The brightest hour of unborn Spring,
Through the winter wandering,
Found, it seems, the halcyon Morn
To hoar February born ;
Bending from Heaven, in azure mirth,
It kissed the forehead of the Earth,
And smiled upon the silent sea,
And bade the frozen streams be free,
And waked to music all their fountains,
And breathed upon the frozen mountains,
And like a prophetess of May
Strewed flowers upon the barren way,
Making the wintry world appear
Like one on whom thou smilest, dear.

Away, away, from men and towns,
To the wild wood and the downs—
To the silent wilderness
Where the soul need not repress
Its music lest it should not find
An echo in another's mind,
While the touch of Nature's art
Harmonizes heart to heart.
I leave this notice on my door
For each accustomed visitor :—
"I am gone into the fields
To take what this sweet hour yields ;—
Reflexion, you may come to-morrow,
Sit by the fireside with Sorrow.—
You with the unpaid bill, Despair,—
You tiresome verse-reciter, Care,—
I will pay you in the grave,—
Death will listen to your stave.
Expectation too, be off !
To-day is for itself enough ;
Hope, in pity mock not Woe
With smiles, nor follow where I go ;
Long having lived on thy sweet food,
At length I find one moment's good
After long pain—with all your love,
This you never told me of."

Radiant Sister of the Day,
Awake ! arise ! and come away !
To the wild woods and the plains,
And the pools where winter rains
Image all their roof of leaves,
Where the pine its garland weaves
Of sapless green and ivy dun
Round stems that never kiss the sun ;
Where the lawns and pastures be,
And the sand-hills of the sea ;—

Where the melting hoar-frost wets
The daisy-star that never sets,
And wind-flowers, and violets,
Which yet join not scent to hue,
Crown the pale year weak and new ;
When the night is left behind
In the deep east, dun and blind,
And the blue noon is over us,
And the multitudinous
Billows murmur at our feet,
Where the earth and ocean meet,
And all things seem only one
In the universal sun.

TO JANE—THE RECOLLECTION

I

Now the last day of many days,
All beautiful and bright as thou,
The loveliest and the last, is dead,
Rise, Memory, and write its praise !
Up to thy wonted work ! come, trace
The epitaph of glory fled,—
For now the Earth has changed its face,
A frown is on the Heaven's brow.

II

We wandered to the pine forest
That skirts the Ocean's foam,
The lightest wind was in its nest,
The tempest in its home.
The whispering waves were half asleep
The clouds were gone to play,
And on the bosom of the deep,
The smile of Heaven lay ;
It seemed as if the hour were one
Sent from beyond the skies,

Which scattered from above the sun
A light of Paradise.

III

We paused amid the pines that stood
The giants of the waste,
Tortured by storms to shapes as rude
As serpents interlaced,
And soothed by every azure breath,
That under heaven is blown,
To harmonies and hues beneath,
As tender as its own ;
Now all the tree-tops lay asleep,
Like green waves on the sea,
As still as in the silent deep
The ocean woods may be.

IV

How calm it was !—the silence there
By such a chain was bound
That even the busy woodpecker
Made stiller by her sound
The inviolable quietness ;
The breath of peace we drew
With its soft motion made not less
The calm that round us grew.
There seemed from the remotest seat
Of the white mountain waste,
To the soft flower beneath our feet,
A magic circle traced,—
A spirit interfused around,
A thrilling silent life,
To momentary peace it bound
Our mortal nature's strife ;—
And still I felt the centre of
The magic circle there
Was one fair form that filled with love
The lifeless atmosphere.

V

We paused beside the pools that lie
Under the forest bough ;
Each seemed as 'twere a little sky
Gulphed in a world below ;
A firmament of purple light,
Which in the dark earth lay,
More boundless than the depth of night,
And purer than the day—
In which the lovely forests grew
As in the upper air,
More perfect both in shape and hue
Than any spreading there.
There lay the glade and neighbouring lawn,
And through the dark green wood
The white sun twinkling like the dawn
Out of a speckled cloud.
Sweet views which in our world above
Can never well be seen,
Were imaged by the water's love
Of that fair forest green.
And all was interfused beneath
With an elysian glow,
An atmosphere without a breath,
A softer day below.
Like one beloved the scene had lent
To the dark water's breast
Its every leaf and lineament
With more than truth expressed ;
Until an envious wind crept by,
Like an unwelcome thought,
Which from the mind's too faithful eye
Blots one dear image out.
Though thou art ever fair and kind,
The forests ever green,
Less oft is peace in Shelley's mind,
Than calm in waters seen.



THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO

LIBRARY



CHORUSES



FROM 'HELLAS'





CHORUSES FROM "HELLAS"

I

Chorus of Greek Captive Women.

WE strew these opiate flowers
On thy restless pillow,—
They were stripped from Orient bowers,
By the Indian billow.
Be thy sleep
Calm and deep,
Like theirs who fell—not ours who weep!

Indian.

Away, unlovely dreams!
Away, false shapes of sleep!
Be his, as Heaven seems,
Clear, and bright, and deep!
Soft as love, and calm as death,
Sweet as a summer night without a breath.

Chorus.

Sleep, sleep! our song is laden
With the soul of slumber;

It was sung by a Samian maiden,
Whose lover was of the number
Who now keep
That calm sleep
Whence none may wake, where none shall weep.

Indian.

I touch thy temples pale !
I breathe my soul on thee !
And could my prayers avail,
All my joy should be
Dead, and I would live to weep,
So thou might'st win one hour of quiet sleep.

II

Life may change, but it may fly not ;
Hope may vanish, but can die not ;
Truth be veiled, but still it burneth ;
Love repulsed,—but it returneth !

Yet were life a charnel where
Hope lay confined with Despair ;
Yet were truth a sacred lie,
Love were lust, if Liberty

Lent not life its soul of light,
Hope its iris of delight,
Truth its prophet's robe to wear,
Love its power to give and bear.

III

In the great morning of the world,
The spirit of God with might unfurled
The flag of Freedom over Chaos,
And all its banded anarchs fled,

Like vultures frightened from Imaus,
Before an earthquake's tread.—
So from Time's tempestuous dawn
Freedom's splendour burst and shone :—
Thermopylae and Marathon
Caught, like mountains beacon-lighted,
The springing Fire.—The wingèd glory
On Philippi half-alighted,
Like an eagle on a promontory.
Its unwearied wings could fan
The quenchless ashes of Milan.
From age to age, from man to man,
It lived ; and lit from land to land
Florence, Albion, Switzerland.

Then night fell ; and, as from night,
Re-assuming fiery flight,
From the West swift Freedom came,
Against the course of Heaven and doom,
A second sun arrayed in flame,
To burn, to kindle, to illumine.
From far Atlantis its young beams
Chased the shadows and the dreams.
France, with all her sanguine steams,
Hid, but quenched it not ; again
Through clouds its shafts of glory rain
From utmost Germany to Spain.

As an eagle fed with morning
Scorns the embattled tempests' warning,
When she seeks her aërie hanging
In the mountain-cedar's hair,
And her brood expect the clanging
Of her wings through the wild air,
Sick with famine :—Freedom, so
To what of Greece remaineth now
Returns ; her hoary ruins glow

Like orient mountains lost in day ;
 Beneath the safety of her wings
Her renovated nurslings prey,
 And in the naked lightnings
Of truth they purge their dazzled eyes.
Let Freedom leave—where'er she flies,
A Desert, or a Paradise :
 Let the beautiful and the brave
 Share her glory, or a grave.

IV

Worlds on worlds are rolling ever
 From creation to decay,
Like the bubbles on a river
 Sparkling, bursting, borne away.
 But they are still immortal
 Who, through birth's orient portal
And death's dark chasm hurrying to and fro,
 Clothe their unceasing flight
 In the brief dust and light
Gathered around their chariots as they go ;
 New shapes they still may weave,
 New gods, new laws receive,
Bright or dim are they as the robes they last
 On Death's bare ribs had cast.

A power from the unknown God,
 A Promethean conqueror came ;
Like a triumphal path he trod
 The thorns of death and shame.
 A mortal shape to him
 Was like the vapour dim
Which the orient planet animates with light ;
 Hell, Sin, and Slavery came,
 Like blood-hounds mild and tame,
Nor preyed, until their Lord had taken flight ;

The moon of Mahomet
Arose, and it shall set :
While blazoned as on heaven's immortal noon
The cross leads generations on.

Swift as the radiant shapes of sleep
From one whose dreams are Paradise
Fly, when the fond wretch wakes to weep,
And day peers forth with her blank eyes ;
So fleet, so faint, so fair,
The Powers of earth and air
Fled from the folding star of Bethlehem :
Apollo, Pan, and Love,
And even Olympian Jove,
Grew weak, for killing Truth had glared on them ;
Our hills and seas and streams
Dispeopled of their dreams,
Their waters turned to blood, their dew to tears,
Wailed for the golden years.

V

The world's great age begins anew,
The golden years return,
The earth doth like a snake renew
Her winter weeds outworn :
Heaven smiles, and faiths and empires gleam,
Like wrecks of a dissolving dream.

A brighter Hellas rears its mountains
From waves serener far ;
A new Peneus rolls his fountains
Against the morning-star.
Where fairer Tempes bloom, there sleep
Young Cyclads on a sunnier deep.

CHORUSES FROM "HELLAS"

A loftier Argo cleaves the main,
Fraught with a later prize ;
Another Orpheus sings again,
And loves, and weeps, and dies.
A new Ulysses leaves once more
Calypso for his native shore.

O, write no more the tale of Troy,
If earth Death's scroll must be !
Nor mix with Laian rage the joy
Which dawns upon the free :
Although a subtler Sphinx renew
Riddles of death Thebes never knew.

Another Athens shall arise,
And to remoter time
Bequeath, like sunset to the skies,
The splendour of its prime ;
And leave, if naught so bright may live,
All earth can take or Heaven can give.

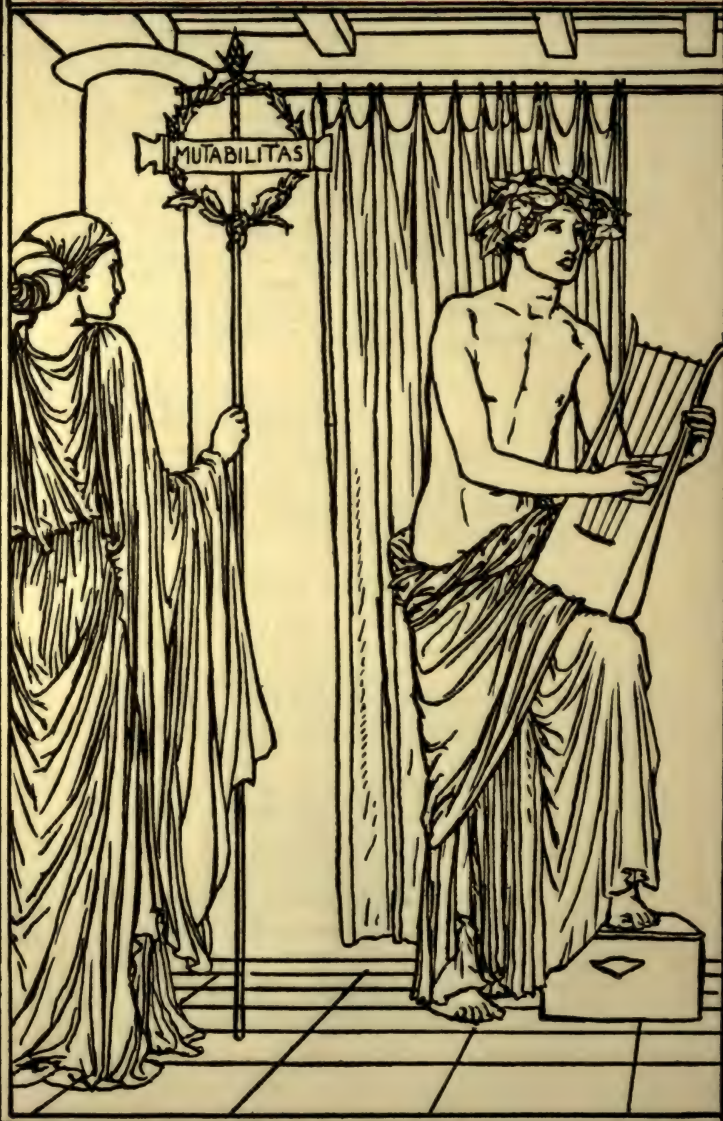
Saturn and Love their long repose
Shall burst, more bright and good
Than all who fell, than One who rose,
Than many unsubdued :
Not gold, not blood, their altar dowers,
But votive tears and symbol flowers.

O cease ! must hate and death return ?
Cease ! must men kill and die ?
Cease ! drain not to its dregs the urn
Of bitter prophecy.
The world is weary of the past,
O might it die or rest at last !





SHORTER



LYRICS







SHORTER LYRICS

ON FANNY GODWIN

HER voice did quiver as we parted,
Yet knew I not that heart was broken
From which it came, and I departed
Heeding not the words then spoken.
Misery—O Misery,
This world is all too wide for thee.

LINES

I
THAT time is dead for ever, child,
Drowned, frozen, dead for ever !
We look on the past
And stare aghast
At the spectres wailing, pale and ghastr,
Of hopes which thou and I beguiled
To death on life's dark river.

II

The stream we gazed on then rolled by ;
Its waves are unreturning ;
But we yet stand
In a lone land,
Like tombs to mark the memory
Of hopes and fears, which fade and flee
In the light of life's dim morning.

. FRAGMENT ON HOME

DEAR home, thou scene of earliest hopes and joys,
The least of which wronged Memory ever makes
Bitterer than all thine unremembered tears.



PASSAGE OF THE APENNINES

LISTEN, listen, Mary mine,
To the whisper of the Apennine ;
It bursts on the roof like the thunder's roar,
Or like the sea on a northern shore,
Heard in its raging ebb and flow
By the captives pent in the cave below.
The Apennine in the light of day
Is a mighty mountain dim and grey,
Which between the earth and sky doth lay ;
But when night comes, a chaos dread
On the dim starlight then is spread,
And the Apennine walks abroad with the storm.

THE PAST

I

WILT thou forget the happy hours
Which we buried in Love's sweet bowers,
Heaping over their corpses cold
Blossoms and leaves instead of mould ?
 Blossoms which were the joys that fell,
 And leaves, the hopes that yet remain.

II

Forget the dead, the past ? O yet
There are ghosts that may take revenge for it,
Memories that make the heart a tomb,
Regrets which glide through the spirit's gloom,
And with ghastly whispers tell
 That joy, once lost, is pain.

TO MARY —

O MARY dear, that you were here
With your brown eyes bright and clear,
And your sweet voice, like a bird
Singing love to its lone mate
In the ivy bower disconsolate ;
Voice the sweetest ever heard !
And your brow more . . .
Than the sky
Of this azure Italy.
Mary dear, come to me soon,
I am not well whilst thou art far ;
As sunset to the spherèd moon,
As twilight to the western star,
Thou, belovèd, art to me.

O Mary dear, that you were here ;
The Castle echo whispers " Here ! "





THE INDIAN SERENADE

I

I ARISE from dreams of thee
In the first sweet sleep of night,
When the winds are breathing low,
And the stars are shining bright :
I arise from dreams of thee,
And a spirit in my feet
Hath led me—who knows how ?
To thy chamber window, Sweet !

II

The wandering airs they faint
On the dark, the silent stream—
And the Champak's odours fail
Like sweet thoughts in a dream ;
The nightingale's complaint,
It dies upon her heart ;—
As I must on thine,
O ! belovèd as thou art !

III

O lift me from the grass !
 I die ! I faint ! I fail !
 Let thy love in kisses rain
 On my lips and eyelids pale.
 My cheek is cold and white, alas !
 My heart beats loud and fast ;—
 Oh ! press it to thine own again,
 Where it will break at last.



TWO FRAGMENTS TO MARY

I

MY dearest Mary, wherefore hast thou gone,
 And left me in this dreary world alone !
 Thy form is here indeed—a lovely one—
 But thou art fled, gone down the dreary road,
 That leads to Sorrow's most obscure abode ;
 Thou sittest on the hearth of pale despair,
 Where
 For thine own sake I cannot follow thee.

II

The world is dreary,
 And I am weary
 Of wandering on without thee, Mary ;
 A joy was erewhile
 In thy voice and thy smile,
 And 'tis gone, when I should be gone too, Mary.

FRAGMENT: QUESTIONS

Is it that in some brighter sphere
We part from friends we meet with here?
Or do we see the Future pass
Over the Present's dusky glass?
Or what is that that makes us seem
To patch up fragments of a dream,
Part of which comes true, and part
Beats and trembles in the heart?



FRAGMENT: LOVE THE UNIVERSE

AND who feels discord now or sorrow?
Love is the universe to-day—
These are the slaves of dim to-morrow,
Darkening Life's labyrinthine way.

FRAGMENT: CALM THOUGHTS

YE gentle visitations of calm thought—
Moods like the memories of happier earth,
Which come arrayed in thoughts of little worth
Like stars in clouds by the weak winds enwrought,
But that the clouds depart and stars remain,
While they remain, and ye, alas, depart!

LOVE'S PHILOSOPHY

I

THE Fountains mingle with the River
And the Rivers with the Ocean,
The winds of Heaven mix for ever
With a sweet emotion ;
Nothing in the world is single ;
All things by a law divine
In one spirit meet and mingle ;—
Why not I with thine ?—

II

See the mountains kiss high Heaven
And the waves clasp one another ;
No sister-flower would be forgiven
If it disdained its brother ;
And the sunlight clasps the earth
And the moonbeams kiss the sea :
What is all this sweet work worth
If thou kiss not me ?



TO —

I

I FEAR thy kisses, gentle maiden,
Thou needest not fear mine ;
My spirit is too deeply laden
Ever to burthen thine.

II

I fear thy mien, thy tones, thy motion,
Thou needest not fear mine ;
Innocent is the heart's devotion
With which I worship thine.

SONG

I

RARELY, rarely, comest thou,
Spirit of Delight !
Wherefore hast thou left me now
Many a day and night ?
Many a weary night and day
'Tis since thou art fled away.

II

How shall ever one like me
Win thee back again ?
With the joyous and the free
Thou wilt scoff at pain.
Spirit false ! thou hast forgot
All but those who need thee not.

III

As a lizard with the shade
Of a trembling leaf,

Thou with sorrow art dismayed ;
Even the sighs of grief
Reproach thee, that thou art not near,
And reproach thou wilt not hear.

IV

Let me set my mournful ditty
To a merry measure,
Thou wilt never come for pity,
Thou wilt come for pleasure.
Pity then will cut away
Those cruel wings, and thou wilt stay.

V

I love all that thou lovest,
Spirit of Delight !
The fresh Earth in new leaves dressed,
And the starry night ;
Autumn evening, and the morn
When the golden mists are born.

VI

I love snow, and all the forms
Of the radiant frost ;
I love waves, and winds, and storms,
Every thing almost
Which is Nature's, and may be
Untainted by man's misery.

VII

I love tranquil solitude,
And such society
As is quiet, wise and good ;
Between thee and me
What difference? but thou dost possess
The things I seek, not love them less.

VIII

I love Love—though he has wings,
And like light can flee,
But above all other things,
Spirit, I love thee—
Thou art love and life! O come,
Make once more my heart thy home.





WHILE GATHERING FLOWERS ON THE PLAIN OF ENNA

I

SACRED Goddess, Mother Earth,
Thou from whose immortal bosom
Gods and men and beasts have birth,
Leaf and blade and bud and blossom,
Breathe thine influence most divine
On thine own child, Proserpine.

II

If with mists of evening dew
Thou dost nourish these young flowers
Till they grow, in scent and hue,
Fairest children of the hours,
Breathe thine influence most divine
On thine own child, Proserpine.

TO THE MOON

ART thou pale for weariness
Of climbing heaven and gazing on the earth,
Wandering companionless
Among the stars that have a different birth,—
And ever changing, like a joyless eye
That finds no object worth its constancy?

THE WORLD'S WANDERERS

I

TELL me, thou star, whose wings of light
Speed thee in thy fiery flight,
In what cavern of the night
Will thy pinions close now?

II

Tell me, moon, thou pale and grey
Pilgrim of heaven's homeless way,
In what depth of night or day
Seekest thou repose now?

III

Weary wind, who wanderest
Like the world's rejected guest,
Hast thou still some secret nest
On the tree or billow?

SHORTER LYRICS

TIME LONG PAST

I

LIKE the ghost of a dear friend dead
Is Time long past.
A tone which is now forever fled,
A hope which is now forever past,
A love so sweet it could not last,
Was Time long past.

II

There were sweet dreams in the night
Of Time long past:
And, was it sadness or delight,
Each day a shadow onward cast
Which made us wish it yet might last—
That Time long past.

III

There is regret, almost remorse,
For Time long past.
'Tis like a child's belovèd corse
A father watches, till at last
Beauty is like remembrance, cast
From Time long past.

TO NIGHT

I

SWIFTLY walk over the western wave,
Spirit of Night !
Out of the misty eastern cave,
Where all the long and lone daylight,
Thou wovest dreams of joy and fear,
Which make thee terrible and dear,—
Swift be thy flight !

II

Wrap thy form in a mantle grey,
Star-inwrought !
Blind with thine hair the eyes of Day;
Kiss her until she be wearied out,
Then wander o'er city, and sea, and land,
Touching all with thine opiate wand—
Come, long sought !

III

When I arose and saw the dawn,
I sighed for thee ;
When light rode high, and the dew was gone
And noon lay heavy on flower and tree,
And the weary Day turned to his rest,
Lingering like an unloved guest,
I sighed for thee.

IV

Thy brother Death came, and cried,
Wouldst thou me ?
Thy sweet child Sleep, the filmy-eyed,
Murmured like a noon-tide bee,
Shall I nestle near thy side ?
Wouldst thou me ?—And I replied,
No, not thee !

V

Death will come when thou art dead,
Soon, too soon—
Sleep will come when thou art fled ;
Of neither would I ask the boon
I ask of thee, beloved Night—
Swift be thine approaching flight,
Come soon, soon !



FROM THE ARABIC: AN IMITATION

I

MY faint spirit was sitting in the light
Of thy looks, my love ;
It panted for thee like the hind at noon
For the brooks, my love.
Thy barb whose hoofs outspeed the tempest's flight
Bore thee far from me ;
My heart, for my weak feet were weary soon,
Did companion thee.

II

Ah ! fleeter far than fleetest storm or steed,
Or the death they bear,
The heart which tender thought clothes like a dove
With the wings of care ;
In the battle, in the darkness, in the need,
Shall mine cling to thee,
Nor claim one smile for all the comfort, love,
It may bring to thee.



TO EMILIA VIVIANI

MADONNA, wherefore hast thou sent to me

Sweet basil and mignonette,
Embleming love and health, which never yet
In the same wreath might be?

Alas, and they are wet!
Is it with thy kisses or thy tears?

For never rain or dew
Such fragrance drew
From plant or flower—the very doubt endears
My sadness ever new,
The sighs I breathe, the tears I shed for thee.

Send the stars light, but send not love to me,
In whom love ever made
Health like a heap of embers soon to fade.

TIME

UNFATHOMABLE Sea ! whose waves are years,
 Ocean of Time, whose waters of deep woe
 Are brackish with the salt of human tears !
 Thou shoreless flood, which in thy ebb and flow
 Claspest the limits of mortality !
 And sick of prey, yet howling on for more,
 Vomitest thy wrecks on its inhospitable shore ;
 Treacherous in calm, and terrible in storm,
 Who shall put forth on thee,
 Unfathomable Sea ?

TO —

MUSIC, when soft voices die
 Vibrates in the memory ;
 Odours, when sweet violets sicken,
 Live within the sense they quicken ;
 Rose-leaves, when the rose is dead,
 Are heaped for the belovèd's bed ;
 And so thy thoughts, when thou art gone,
 Love itself shall slumber on.

MUTABILITY

I

THE flower that smiles to-day
 To-morrow dies ;
 All that we wish to stay
 Tempt and then flies.
 What is this world's delight ?
 Lightning that mocks the night,
 Brief even as bright.

II

Virtue, how frail it is!
 Friendship how rare!
 Love, how it sells poor bliss
 For proud despair!
 But we, though soon they fall,
 Survive their joy, and all
 Which ours we call.

III

Whilst skies are blue and bright,
 Whilst flowers are gay,
 Whilst eyes that change ere night
 Make glad the day;
 Whilst yet the calm hours creep,
 Dream thou—and from thy sleep
 Then wake to weep.



THE AZIOLA

I

"Do you not hear the Aziola cry?
Methinks she must be nigh,"
Said Mary, as we sate
In dusk, ere stars were lit, or candles brought;
And I, who thought
This Aziola was some tedious woman,
Asked, "Who is Aziola?" How elate
I felt to know that it was nothing human,
No mockery of myself to fear or hate:
And Mary saw my soul,
And laughed, and said, "Disquiet yourself not;
'Tis nothing but a little downy owl."

II

Sad Aziola! many an eventide
Thy music I had heard
By wood and stream, meadow and mountain-side,
And fields and marshes wide,
Such as nor voice, nor lute, nor wind, nor bird,
The soul ever stirred;
Unlike and far sweeter than them all.
Sad Aziola! from that moment I
Loved thee and thy sad cry.

TO-MORROW

I

WHERE art thou, beloved To-morrow?
When young and old and strong and weak,
Rich and poor, through joy and sorrow,
Thy sweet smiles we ever seek,—
In thy place—ah! well-a-day!
We find the thing we fled—To-day.

II

If I walk in Autumn's even
While the dead leaves pass,
If I look on Spring's soft heaven,—
Something is not there which was.
Winter's wondrous frost and snow,
Summer's clouds, where are they now?

TO ———

I

ONE word is too often profaned
For me to profane it,
One feeling too falsely disdained
For thee to disdain it.
One hope is too like despair
For prudence to smother,
And pity from thee more dear
Than that from another.

II

I can give not what men call love,
But wilt thou accept not
The worship the heart lifts above
And the Heavens reject not,—
The desire of the moth for the star,
Of the night for the morrow,
The devotion to something afar
From the sphere of our sorrow?



TO ———

I

WHEN passion's trance is overpast,
If tenderness and truth could last
Or live, whilst all wild feelings keep
Some mortal slumber, dark and deep,
I should not weep, I should not weep!

II

It were enough to feel, to see
Thy soft eyes gazing tenderly,
And dream the rest—and burn and be
The secret food of fires unseen,
Couldst thou but be as thou hast been.

III

After the slumber of the year
The woodland violets re-appear,
All things revive in field or grove
And sky and sea, but two, which move
And form all others, life and love.



A BRIDAL SONG

I

THE golden gates of Sleep unbar
Where Strength and Beauty met together,
Kindle their image like a star
In a sea of glassy weather.
Night, with all thy stars look down,—
Darkness, weep thy holiest dew,—
Never smiled the inconstant moon
On a pair so true.
Let eyes not see their own delight ;—
Haste, swift Hour, and thy flight
Oft renew.

II

Fairies, sprites, and angels keep her !
Holy stars, permit no wrong !
And return to wake the sleeper,
Dawn,—ere it be long !
Oh joy ! oh fear ! what will be done
In the absence of the sun !
Come along !

LINES

I

WHEN the lamp is shattered
The light in the dust lies dead—
When the cloud is scattered
The rainbow's glory is shed.
When the lute is broken,
Sweet tones are remembered not ;
When the lips have spoken,
Loved accents are soon forgot.

II

As music and splendour
Survive not the lamp and the lute,
The heart's echoes render
No song when the spirit is mute,—
No song but sad dirges,
Like the wind through a ruined cell,
Or the mournful surges
That ring the dead seaman's knell.

III

When hearts have once mingled
Love first leaves the well-built nest,—
The weak one is singled
To endure what it once possessed.
O, Love! who bewailest
The frailty of all things here,
Why choose you the frailest
For your cradle, your home and your bier?

IV

Its passions will rock thee
As the storms rock the ravens on high :
Bright reason will mock thee,
Like the sun from a wintry sky.
From thy nest every rafter
Will rot, and thine eagle home
Leave thee naked to laughter,
When leaves fall and cold winds come.



TO JANE

I

THE keen stars were twinkling,
And the fair moon was rising among them,
Dear Jane!

The guitar was tinkling,
But the notes were not sweet till you sung them
Again.

II

As the moon's soft splendour
O'er the faint cold starlight of heaven
Is thrown,
So your voice most tender
To the strings without soul had then given
Its own.

III

The stars will awaken,
Though the moon sleep a full hour later,
To-night;
No leaf will be shaken
Whilst the dews of your melody scatter
Delight.

IV

Though the sound overpowers,
Sing again, with your dear voice revealing
A tone
Of some world far from ours,
Where music and moonlight and feeling
Are one.

SONG

A WIDOW bird sate mourning for her love
Upon a wintry bough ;
The frozen wind crept on above,
The freezing stream below.

There was no leaf upon the forest bare,
No flower upon the ground,
And little motion in the air
Except the mill-wheel's sound.





DIRGES AND



LAMENTS



AMENT





DIRGES AND LAMENTS

THE DIRGE OF BEATRICE

FALSE friend, wilt thou smile or weep
 When my life is laid asleep?
 Little cares for a smile or a tear
 The clay-cold corpse upon the bier!
 Farewell! Heigho!
 What is this whispers low?
 There is a snake in thy smile, my dear;
 And bitter poison within thy tear.

Sweet sleep, were death like to thee,
 Or if thou couldst mortal be,
 I would close these eyes of pain;
 When to wake? Never again.
 O, World! Farewell!
 Listen to the passing bell!
 It says, thou and I must part,
 With a light and a heavy heart.

AUTUMN

A DIRGE

I

THE warm sun is failing, the bleak wind is wailing,
The bare boughs are sighing, the pale flowers are dying,
And the year
On the earth her death-bed, in a shroud of leaves dead,
Is lying.
Come, months, come away,
From November to May,
In your saddest array ;
Follow the bier
Of the dead cold year,
And like dim shadows watch by her sepulchre.

II

The chill rain is falling, the nipped worm is crawling,
The rivers are swelling, the thunder is knelling
For the year ;
The blithe swallows are flown, and the lizards each gone
To his dwelling ;
Come, months, come away ;
Put on white, black, and grey ;
Let your light sisters play—
Ye, follow the bier
Of the dead cold year,
And make her grave green with tear on tear.



DIRGE FOR THE YEAR

I

ORPHAN hours, the year is dead,—
Come and sigh, come and weep!
Merry hours, smile instead,
For the year is but asleep.
See, it smiles as it is sleeping,
Mocking your untimely weeping.

II

As an earthquake rocks a corse
In its coffin in the clay,
So White Winter, that rough nurse,
Rocks the death-cold year to-day;
Solemn hours! wail aloud
For your mother in her shroud.

III

As the wild air stirs and sways
The tree-swung cradle of a child,
So the breath of these rude days
Rocks the year :—be calm and mild,
Trembling hours,—she will arise
With new love within her eyes.

IV

January grey is here,
Like a sexton by her grave;
February bears the bier,
March with grief doth howl and rave
And April weeps—but O, ye hours,
Follow with May's fairest flowers.



A LAMENT

I

OH, world! oh, life! oh, time!
On whose last steps I climb
Trembling at that where I had stood before;
When will return the glory of your prime?
No more—O, never more!

II

Out of the day and night
A joy has taken flight;
Fresh spring, and summer, and winter hoar,
Move my faint heart with grief, but with delight
No more—O, never more!

REMEMBRANCE

I

SWIFTER far than summer's flight—
Swifter far than youth's delight—
Swifter far than happy night,
 Art thou come and gone—
As the wood when leaves are shed,
As the night when sleep is fled,
As the heart when joy is dead,
 I am left lone, alone.

II

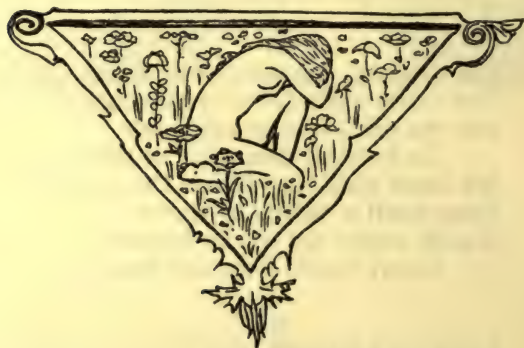
The swallow summer comes again—
The owlet night resumes his reign—
But the wild-swan youth is fain
 To fly with thee, false as thou.
My heart each day desires the morrow ;
Sleep itself is turned to sorrow ;
Vainly would my winter borrow
 Sunny leaves from any bough.

III

Lilies for a bridal bed—
Roses for a matron's head—
Violets for a maiden dead—
 Pansies let *my* flowers be :
On the living grave I bear
Scatter them without a tear—
Let no friend, however dear,
 Waste one hope, one fear for me.

A DIRGE

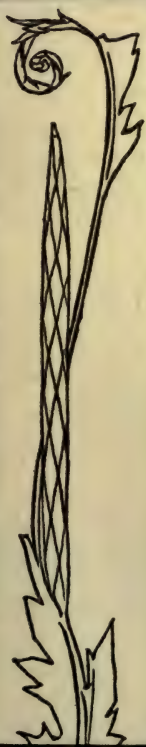
ROUGH wind, that moanest loud
Grief too sad for song ;
Wild wind, when sullen cloud
Knells all the night long ;
Sad storm, whose tears are vain,
Bare woods, whose branches stain,
Deep caves and dreary main,
Wail, for the world's wrong !







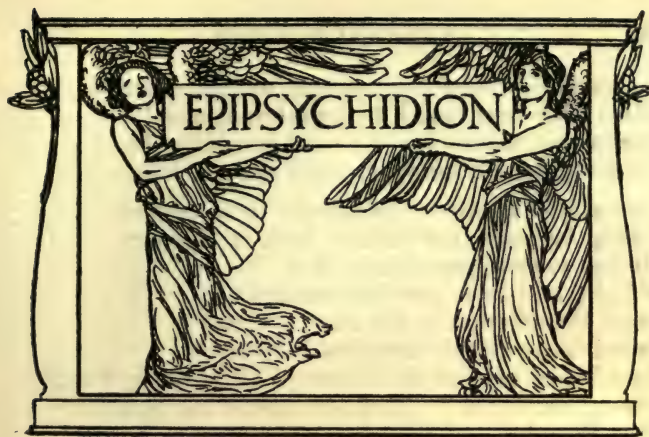
EPIPSYCHIDION



“L'anima amante si slancia fuori del creato, e si crea nel infinito un Mondo tutto per essa, diverso assai da questo oscuro e pauroso baratro.”

Her own words.

My Song, I fear that thou wilt find but few
Who fitly shall conceive thy reasoning,
Of such hard matter dost thou entertain ;
Whence, if by misadventure, chance should bring
Thee to base company, (as chance may do,)
Quite unaware of what thou dost contain,
I prithee, comfort thy sweet self again,
My last delight! tell them that they are dull,
And bid them own that thou art beautiful.



VERSES ADDRESSED TO THE NOBLE AND UNFORTUNATE LADY, EMILIA VIVIANI, NOW IMPRISONED
IN THE CONVENT OF ST. ANNE'S, PISA

SWEET Spirit! Sister of that orphan one,
Whose empire is the name thou weapest on
In my heart's temple I suspend to thee
These votive wreaths of withered memory.

Poor captive bird! who, from thy narrow cage,
Pourest such music, that it might assuage
The rugged hearts of those who prisoned thee,
Were they not deaf to all sweet melody;
This song shall be thy rose: its petals pale
Are dead, indeed, my adored Nightingale!
But soft and fragrant is the faded blossom,
And it has no thorn left to wound thy bosom.

High, spirit-wingèd Heart! who dost for ever
Beat thine unfeeling bars with vain endeavour,
Till those bright plumes of thought, in which arrayed
It over-soared this low and worldly shade,

Lie shattered ; and thy panting, wounded breast
 Stains with dear blood its unmaternal nest !
 I weep vain tears : blood would less bitter be,
 Yet poured forth gladlier, could it profit thee.

Seraph of Heaven ! too gentle to be human,
 Veiling beneath that radiant form of Woman
 All that is insupportable in thee
 Of light, and love, and immortality !
 Sweet Benediction in the eternal Curse !
 Veiled Glory of this lampless Universe !
 Thou Moon beyond the clouds ! Thou living Form
 Among the Dead ! Thou Star above the Storm !
 Thou Wonder, and thou Beauty, and thou Terror !
 Thou Harmony of Nature's art ! Thou Mirror
 In whom, as in the splendour of the Sun,
 All shapes look glorious which thou gazest on !
 Aye, even the dim words which obscure thee now
 Flash, lightning-like, with unaccustomed glow ;
 I pray thee that thou blot from this sad song
 All of its much mortality and wrong,
 With those clear drops, which start like sacred dew
 From the twin lights thy sweet soul darkens through,
 Weeping, till sorrow becomes ecstasy :
 Then smile on it, so that it may not die.

I never thought before my death to see
 Youth's vision thus made perfect. Emily,
 I love thee ; though the world by no thin name
 Will hide that love from its unvalued shame.
 Would we two had been twins of the same mother !
 Or, that the name my heart lent to another
 Could be a sister's bond for her and thee,
 / Blending two beams of one eternity !
 Yet were one lawful and the other true,
 These names, though dear, could paint not, as is due,
 How beyond refuge I am thine. Ah me !
 I am not thine : I am part of thee.

Sweet Lamp! my moth-like Muse has burnt its wings;
Or, like a dying swan who soars and sings,
Young Love should teach Time, in his own grey style,
All that thou art. Art thou not void of guile,
A lovely soul formed to be bless'd and bless?
A well of sealed and secret happiness,
Whose waters like blithe light and music are,
Vanquishing dissonance and gloom? A Star
Which moves not in the moving Heavens, alone?
A smile amid dark frowns? a gentle tone
Amid rude voices? a beloved light?
A Solitude, a Refuge, a Delight?
A Lute, which those whom love has taught to play
Make music on, to soothe the roughest day
And lull fond grief asleep? a buried treasure?
A cradle of young thoughts of wingless pleasure?
A violet-shrouded grave of Woe?—I measure
The world of fancies, seeking one like thee,
And find—alas! mine own infirmity.

She met me, Stranger, upon life's rough way,
And lured me towards sweet Death; as Night by Day,
Winter by Spring, or Sorrow by swift Hope,
Led into light, life, peace. An antelope,
In the suspended impulse of its lightness,
Were less ætherially light: the brightness
Of her divinest presence trembles through
Her limbs, as underneath a cloud of dew
Embodied in the windless Heaven of June
Amid the splendour-wingèd stars, the Moon
Burns, inextinguishably beautiful:
And from her lips, as from a hyacinth full
Of honey-dew, a liquid murmur drops,
Killing the sense with passion; sweet as stops
Of planetary music heard in trance.
In her mild lights the starry spirits dance,
The sun-beams of those wells which ever leap

Under the lightnings of the soul—too deep
For the brief fathom-line of thought or sense.
The glory of her being, issuing thence,
Stains the dead, blank, cold air with a warm shade
Of unentangled intermixture, made
By Love, of light and motion : one intense
Diffusion, one serene Omnipresence,
Whose flowing outlines mingle in their flowing
Around her cheeks and utmost fingers glowing
With the unintermitted blood, which there
Quivers, (as in a fleece of snow-like air
The crimson pulse of living morning quiver,)
Continuously prolonged, and ending never,
Till they are lost, and in that Beauty furled
Which penetrates and clasps and fills the world ;
Scarce visible from extreme loveliness.
Warm fragrance seems to fall from her light dress
And her loose hair ; and where some heavy tress
The air of her own speed has disentwined,
The sweetness seems to satiate the faint wind ;
And in the soul a wild odour is felt,
Beyond the sense, like fiery dews that melt
Into the bosom of a frozen bud.—
See where she stands ! a mortal shape indued
With love and life and light and deity,
And motion which may change but cannot die ;
An image of some bright Eternity ;
A shadow of some golden dream ; a Splendour
Leaving the third sphere pilotless ; a tender
Reflexion of the eternal Moon of Love
Under whose motions life's dull billows move ;
A Metaphor of Spring and Youth and Morning ;
A Vision like incarnate April, warning,
With smiles and tears, Frost the Anatomy
Into his summer grave.

Ah, woe is me !

What have I dared? where am I lifted? how
Shall I descend, and perish not? I know
That Love makes all things equal: I have heard
By mine own heart this joyous truth averred:
The spirit of the worm beneath the sod
In love and worship blends itself with God.

Spouse! Sister! Angel! Pilot of the Fate
Whose course has been so starless! O too late
Belovèd! O too soon adored, by me!
For in the fields of immortality
My spirit should at first have worshipped thine,
A divine presence in a place divine;
Or should have moved beside it on this earth,
A shadow of that substance, from its birth;
But not as now:—I love thee; yes, I feel
That on the fountain of my heart a seal
Is set, to keep its waters pure and bright
For thee, since in those *tears* thou hast delight.
We—are we not formed, as notes of music are,
For one another, though dissimilar;
Such difference without discord, as can make
Those sweetest sounds, in which all spirits shake
As trembling leaves in a continuous air?

Thy wisdom speaks in me, and bids me dare
Beacon the rocks on which high hearts are wrecked.
I never was attached to that great sect,
Whose doctrine is, that each one should select
Out of the crowd a mistress or a friend,
And all the rest, though fair and wise, commend
To cold oblivion, though it is in the code
Of modern morals, and the beaten road
Which those poor slaves with weary footsteps tread,
Who travel to their home among the dead
By the broad highway of the world, and so
With one chained friend, perhaps a jealous foe,
The dreariest and the longest journey go.

True Love in this differs from gold and clay,
That to divide is not to take away.
Love is like understanding, that grows bright,
Gazing on many truths ; 'tis like thy light,
Imagination ! which from earth and sky,
And from the depths of human phantasy,
As from a thousand prisms and mirrors, fills
The universe with glorious beams, and kills
Error, the worm, with many a sun-like arrow
Of its reverberated lightning. Narrow
The heart that loves, the brain that contemplates,
The life that wears, the spirit that creates
One object, and one form, and builds thereby
A sepulchre for its eternity.

Mind from its object differs most in this :
Evil from good ; misery from happiness ;
The baser from the nobler ; the impure
And frail, from what is clear and must endure.
If you divide suffering and dross, you may
Diminish till it is consumed away ;
If you divide pleasure and love and thought,
Each part exceeds the whole ; and we know not
How much, while any yet remains unshared,
Of pleasure may be gained, of sorrow spared :
This truth is that deep well, whence sages draw
The unenvied light of hope ; the eternal law
By which those live, to whom this world of life
Is as a garden ravaged, and whose strife
Tills for the promise of a later birth
The wilderness of this Elysian earth.

There was a Being whom my spirit oft
Met on its visioned wanderings, far aloft,
In the clear golden prime of my youth's dawn,
Upon the fairy isles of sunny lawn,
Amid the enchanted mountains, and the caves

Of divine sleep, and on the air-like waves
Of wonder-level dream, whose tremulous floor
Paved her light steps ;—on an imagined shore,
Under the grey beak of some promontory
She met me, robed in such exceeding glory,
That I beheld her not. In solitudes
Her voice came to me through the whispering woods,
And from the fountains, and the odours deep
Of flowers, which, like lips murmuring in their sleep
Of the sweet kisses which had lulled them there,
Breathed but of *her* to the enamoured air ;
And from the breezes whether low or loud,
And from the rain of every passing cloud,
And from the singing of the summer-birds,
And from all sounds, all silence. In the words
Of antique verse and high romance,—in form,
Sound, colour—in whatever checks that Storm
Which with the shattered present chokes the past ;
And in that best philosophy, whose taste
Makes this cold common hell, our life, a doom
As glorious as a fiery martyrdom ;
Her Spirit was the harmony of truth.—

Then, from the caverns of my dreamy youth
I sprang, as one sandalled with plumes of fire,
And towards the loadstar of my one desire,
I flitted, like a dizzy moth, whose flight
Is as a dead leaf's in the owlet light,
When it would seek in Hesper's setting sphere
A radiant death, a fiery sepulchre,
As if it were a lamp of earthly flame.—
But She, whom prayers or tears then could not tame,
Passed, like a God throned on a wingèd planet,
Whose burning plumes to tenfold swiftness fan it,
Into the dreary cone of our life's shade ;
And as a man with mighty loss dismayed,
I would have followed, though the grave between

Yawned like a gulph whose spectres are unseen :
When a voice said :—" O Thou of hearts the weakest,
" The phantom is beside thee whom thou seekest."
Then I—" where?" the world's echo answered " where!"
And in that silence, and in my despair,
I questioned every tongueless wind that flew
Over my tower of mourning, if it knew
Whither 'twas fled, this soul out of my soul ;
And murmured names and spells which have control
Over the sightless tyrants of our fate ;
But neither prayer nor verse could dissipate
The night which closed on her ; nor uncreate
That world within this Chaos, mine and me,
Of which she was the veiled Divinity,
The world I say of thoughts that worshipped her :
And therefore I went forth, with hope and fear
And every gentle passion sick to death,
Feeding my course with expectation's breath,
Into the wintry forest of our life ;
And struggling through its error with vain strife,
And stumbling in my weakness and my haste,
And half bewildered by new forms, I passed
Seeking among those untaught foresters
If I could find one form resembling hers,
In which she might have masked herself from me.
There,—One, whose voice was venomed melody,
Sate by a well, under blue night-shade bowers ;
The breath of her false mouth was like faint flowers,
Her touch was as electric poison,—flame
Out of her looks into my vitals came,
And from her living cheeks and bosom flew
A killing air, which pierced like honey-dew
Into the core of my green heart, and lay
Upon its leaves ; until, as hair grown grey
O'er a young brow, they hid its unblown prime
With ruins of unseasonable time.

In many mortal forms I rashly sought
The shadow of that idol of my thought.
And some were fair—but beauty dies away :
Others were wise—but honeyed words betray :
And One was true—oh ! why not true to me ?
Then, as a hunted deer that could not flee,
I turned upon my thoughts, and stood at bay,
Wounded and weak and panting ; the cold day
Trembled, for pity of my strife and pain.
When, like a noon-day dawn, there shone again
Deliverance. One stood on my path who seemed
As like the glorious shape which I had dreamed,
As is the Moon, whose changes ever run
Into themselves, to the eternal Sun ;
The cold chaste Moon, the Queen of Heaven's bright
 isles,
Who makes all beautiful on which she smiles,
That wandering shrine of soft yet icy flame
Which ever is transformed, yet still the same,
And warms not but illumines. Young and fair
As the descended Spirit of that sphere,
She hid me, as the Moon may hide the night
From its own darkness, until all was bright
Between the Heaven and Earth of my calm mind,
And, as a cloud charioted by the wind,
She led me to a cave in that wild place,
And sate beside me, with her downward face
Illumining my slumbers, like the Moon
Waxing and waning o'er Endymion.
And I was laid asleep, spirit and limb,
And all my being became bright or dim
As the Moon's image in a summer sea,
According as she smiled or frowned on me ;
And there I lay, within a chaste cold bed :
Alas, I then was nor alive nor dead :—
For at her silver voice came Death and Life,
Unmindful each of their accustomed strife,

Masked like twin babes, a sister and a brother,
The wandering hopes of one abandoned mother,
And through the cavern without wings they flew,
And cried "Away, he is not of our crew."
I wept, and though it be a dream, I weep.

What storms then shook the ocean of my sleep,
Blotting that Moon, whose pale and waning lips
Then shrank as in the sickness of eclipse ;—
And how my soul was as a lampless sea,
And who was then its Tempest ; and when She,
The Planet of that hour, was quenched, what frost
Crept o'er those waters, till from coast to coast
The moving billows of my being fell
Into a death of ice, immovable ;—
And then—what earthquakes made it gape and split,
The white Moon smiling all the while on it,
These words conceal :—If not, each word would be
The key of staunchless tears. Weep not for me !

At length, into the obscure Forest came
The Vision I had sought through grief and shame.
Athwart that wintry wilderness of thorns
Flashed from her motion splendour like the Morn's,
And from her presence life was radiated
Through the grey earth and branches bare and dead ;
So that her way was paved, and roofed above
With flowers as soft as thoughts of budding love ;
And music from her respiration spread
Like light,—all other sounds were penetrated
By the small, still, sweet spirit of that sound,
So that the savage winds hung mute around ;
And odours warm and fresh fell from her hair
Dissolving the dull cold in the froze air :
Soft as an Incarnation of the Sun,
When light is changed to love, this glorious One
Floated into the cavern where I lay,

And called my Spirit, and the dreaming clay
Was lifted by the thing that dreamed below
As smoke by fire, and in her beauty's glow
I stood, and felt the dawn of my long night
Was penetrating me with living light :
I knew it was the Vision veiled from me
So many years—that it was Emily.

Twin Spheres of light who rule this passive Earth,
This world of love, this *me* ; and into birth
Awaken all its fruits and flowers, and dart
Magnetic might into its central heart ;
And lift its billows and its mists, and guide
By everlasting laws each wind and tide
To its fit cloud, and its appointed cave ;
And lull its storms, each in the craggy grave
Which was its cradle, luring to faint bowers
The armies of the rainbow-wingèd showers ;
And, as those married lights, which from the towers
Of Heaven look forth and fold the wandering globe
In liquid sleep and splendour, as a robe ;
And all their many-mingled influence blend,
If equal, yet unlike, to one sweet end ;—
So ye, bright regents, with alternate sway
Govern my sphere of being, night and day !
Thou, not disdaining even a borrowed might ;
Thou, not eclipsing a remoter light ;
And, through the shadow of the seasons three,
From Spring to Autumn's sere maturity,
Light it into the Winter of the tomb,
Where it may ripen to a brighter bloom.
Thou too, O Comet beautiful and fierce,
Who drew the heart of this frail Universe
Towards thine own ; till, wrecked in that convulsion
Alternating attraction and repulsion,
Thine went astray and that was rent in twain ;
Oh, float into our azure heaven again !

Be there love's folding-star at thy return ;
 The living Sun will feed thee from its urn
 Of golden fire ; the Moon will veil her horn
 In thy last smiles ; adoring Even and Morn
 Will worship thee with incense of calm breath
 And lights and shadows ; as the star of Death
 And Birth is worshipped by those sisters wild
 Called Hope and Fear—upon the heart are piled
 Their offerings,—of this sacrifice divine
 A World shall be the altar.

Lady mine,

Scorn not these flowers of thought, the fading birth
 Which from its heart of hearts that plant puts forth
 Whose fruit, made perfect by thy sunny eyes,
 Will be as of the trees of Paradise.



The day is come, and thou wilt fly with me.
 To whatsoever of dull mortality
 Is mine, remain a vestal sister still ;
 To the intense, the deep, the imperishable,
 Not mine but me, henceforth be thou united
 Even as a bride, delighting and delighted.
 The hour is come :—the destined Star has risen
 Which shall descend upon a vacant prison.

The walls are high, the gates are strong, thick set
The sentinels—but true love never yet
Was thus constrained : it overleaps all fence :
Like lightning, with invisible violence
Piercing its continents ; like Heaven's free breath,
Which he who grasps can hold not ; liker Death,
Who rides upon a thought, and makes his way
Through temple, tower, and palace, and the array
Of arms : more strength has Love than he or they ;
For it can burst its charnel, and make free
The limbs in chains, the heart in agony,
The soul in dust and chaos.

Emily,

A ship is floating in the harbour now,
A wind is hovering o'er the mountain's brow ;
There is a path on the sea's azure floor,
No keel has ever ploughed that path before ;
The halcyons brood around the foamless isles ;
The treacherous Ocean has forsworn its wiles ;
The merry mariners are bold and free :
Say, my heart's sister, wilt thou sail with me ?
Our bark is as an albatross, whose nest
Is a far Eden of the purple East ;
And we between her wings will sit, while Night
And Day, and Storm, and Calm, pursue their flight,
Our ministers, along the boundless Sea,
Treading each other's heels, unheededly.
It is an isle under Ionian skies,
Beautiful as a wreck of Paradise ;
And, for the harbours are not safe and good,
This land would have remained a solitude
But for some pastoral people native there,
Who from the Elysian, clear, and golden air
Draw the last spirit of the age of gold,—
Simple and spirited, innocent and bold.
The blue Aegean girds this chosen home,
With ever-changing sound and light and foam,

Kissing the sifted sands and caverns hoar ;
And all the winds wandering along the shore
Undulate with the undulating tide :
There are thick woods where sylvan forms abide ;
And many a fountain, rivulet, and pond,
As clear as elemental diamond,
Or serene morning air ; and far beyond,
The mossy tracks made by the goats and deer
(Which the rough shepherd treads but once a year,)
Pierce into glades, caverns, and bowers, and halls
Built round with ivy, which the waterfalls
Illumining, with sound that never fails
Accompany the noon-day nightingales ;
And all the place is peopled with sweet airs ;
The light clear element which the isle wears
Is heavy with the scent of lemon-flowers,
Which floats like mist laden with unseen showers
And falls upon the eyelids like faint sleep ;
And from the moss violets and jonquils peep,
And dart their arrowy odour through the brain
Till you might faint with that delicious pain.
And every motion, odour, beam, and tone,
With that deep music is in unison :
Which is a soul within the soul—they seem
Like echoes of an antenatal dream.—
It is an isle 'twixt Heaven, Air, Earth, and Sea,
Cradled, and hung in clear tranquillity ;
Bright as that wandering Eden Lucifer,
Washed by the soft blue Oceans of young air.
It is a favoured place. Famine or Blight,
Pestilence, War and Earthquake, never light
Upon its mountain-peaks ; blind vultures, they
Sail onward far upon their fatal way :
The wingèd storms, chaunting their thunder-psalm
To other lands, leave azure chasms of calm
Over this isle, or weep themselves in dew,
From which its fields and woods ever renew

Their green and golden immortality.
And from the sea there rise, and from the sky
There fall, clear exhalations, soft and bright,
Veil after veil, each hiding some delight,
Which Sun or Moon or zephyr draw aside,
Till the isle's beauty, like a naked bride
Glowing at once with love and loveliness,
Blushes and trembles at its own excess :
Yet, like a buried lamp, a Soul no less
Burns in the heart of this delicious isle,
An atom of th' Eternal, whose own smile
Unfolds itself, and may be felt, not seen,
O'er the grey rocks, blue waves, and forests green,
Filling their bare and void interstices.—
But the chief marvel of the wilderness
Is a lone dwelling, built by whom or how
None of the rustic island-people know :
'Tis not a tower of strength, though with its height
It overtops the woods ; but, for delight,
Some wise and tender Ocean-King, ere crime
Had been invented, in the world's young prime,
Reared it, a wonder of that simple time,
An envy of the isles, a pleasure-house
Made sacred to his sister and his spouse.
It scarce seems now a wreck of human art,
But, as it were Titanic ; in the heart
Of Earth having assumed its form, then grown
Out of the mountains, from the living stone,
Lifting itself in caverns light and high :
For all the antique and learnèd imagery
Has been erased, and in the place of it
The ivy and the wild-vine interknit
The volumes of their many-twining stems ;
Parasite flowers illumine with dewy gems
The lampless halls, and when they fade, the sky
Peeps through their winter-woof of tracery
With Moon-light patches, or star atoms keen,

Or fragments of the day's intense serene ;—
Working mosaic on their Parian floors.
And, day and night, aloof, from the high towers
And terraces, the Earth and Ocean seem
To sleep in one another's arms, and dream
Of waves, flowers, clouds, woods, rocks, and all that we
Read in their smiles, and call reality.

This isle and house are mine, and I have vowed
Thee to be lady of the solitude.—
And I have fitted up some chambers there
Looking towards the golden Eastern air,
And level with the living winds, which flow
Like waves above the living waves below.—
I have sent books and music there, and all
Those instruments with which high spirits call
The future from its cradle, and the past
Out of its grave, and make the present last
In thoughts and joys which sleep, but cannot die,
Folded within their own eternity.
Our simple life wants little, and true taste
Hires not the pale drudge Luxury, to waste
The scene it would adorn, and therefore, still,
Nature, with all her children, haunts the hill.
The ring-dove, in the embowering ivy, yet
Keeps up her love-lament, and the owls flit
Round the evening tower, and the young stars glance
Between the quick bats in their twilight dance ;
The spotted deer bask in the fresh moon-light
Before our gate, and the slow, silent night
Is measured by the pants of their calm sleep.
Be this our home in life, and when years heap
Their withered hours, like leaves, on our decay,
Let us become the over-hanging day,
The living soul of this Elysian isle,
Conscious, inseparable, one. Meanwhile
We two will rise, and sit, and walk together,

Under the roof of blue Ionian weather,
And wander in the meadows, or ascend
The mossy mountains, where the blue heavens bend
With lightest winds, to touch their paramour ;
Or linger, where the pebble-paven shore,
Under the quick, faint kisses of the sea
Trembles and sparkles as with ecstasy,—
Possessing and possessed by all that is
Within that calm circumference of bliss,
And by each other, till to love and live
Be one :—or, at the noontide hour, arrive
Where some old cavern hoar seems yet to keep
The moonlight of the expired night asleep,
Through which the awakened day can never peep ;
A veil for our seclusion, close as Night's,
Where secure sleep may kill thine innocent lights ;
Sleep, the fresh dew of languid love, the rain
Whose drops quench kisses till they burn again.
And we will talk, until thought's melody
Become too sweet for utterance, and it die
In words, to live again in looks, which dart
With thrilling tone into the voiceless heart,
Harmonizing silence without a sound.
Our breath shall intermix, our bosoms bound,
And our veins beat together ; and our lips,
With other eloquence than words, eclipse
The soul that burns between them ; and the wells
Which boil under our being's inmost cells,
The fountains of our deepest life, shall be
Confused in passion's golden purity,
As mountain-springs under the morning Sun.
We shall become the same, we shall be one
Spirit within two frames, oh ! wherefore two ?
One passion in twin-hearts, which grows and grew,
Till like two meteors of expanding flame,
Those spheres instinct with it become the same,
Touch, mingle, are transfigured ; ever still

Burning, yet ever inconsumable :
In one another's substance finding food,
Like flames too pure and light and unimbued
To nourish their bright lives with baser prey,
Which point to Heaven and cannot pass away :
One hope within two wills, one will beneath
Two overshadowing minds, one life, one death,
One Heaven, one Hell, one immortality,
And one annihilation. Woe is me !
The wingèd words on which my soul would pierce
Into the height of love's rare Universe
Are chains of lead around its flight of fire.—
I pant, I sink, I tremble, I expire !

Weak Verses, go, kneel at your Sovereign's feet,
And say :—" We are the masters of thy slave ;
"What wouldest thou with us and ours and thine ?"
Then call your sisters from Oblivion's cave,
All singing loud : " Love's very pain is sweet.
" But its reward is in the world divine
" Which, if not here, it builds beyond the grave."
So shall ye live when I am there. Then haste
Over the hearts of men, until ye meet
Marina, Vanna, Primus, and the rest,
And bid them love each other and be bless'd :
And leave the troop which errs, and which reproves,
And come and be my guest,—for I am Love's.





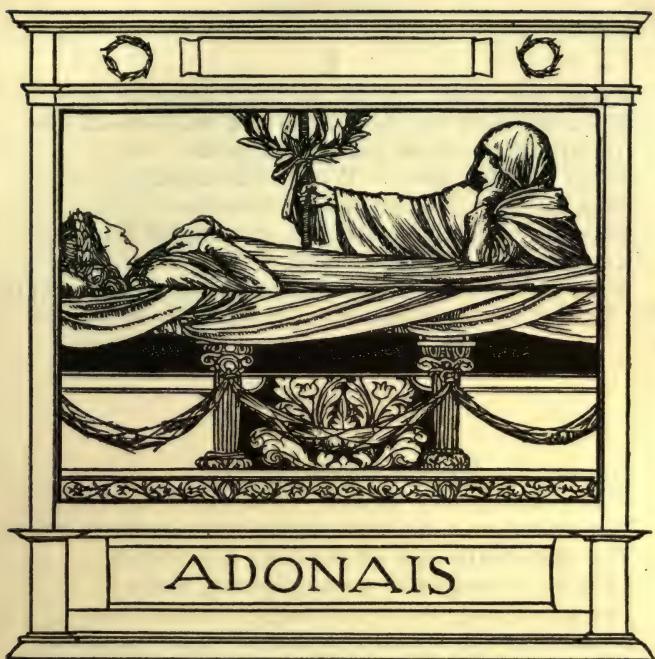




ADONAIIS
AN ELEGY
ON THE DEATH OF
JOHN KEATS



Ἄσκησον πρὶν μὲν ἑλπίδας ἐνὶ ζώοισιν ἕως.
Νῦν δὲ θανάτων λάμπεις ἔσπερος ἐν φθιμένοις
PLATO.



I

I WEEP for Adonais—he is dead!
O, weep for Adonais! though our tears
Thaw not the frost which binds so dear a head!
And thou, sad Hour, selected from all years
To mourn our loss, rouse thy obscure compeers,
And teach them thine own sorrow, say: with me
Died Adonais; till the Future dares
Forget the Past, his fate and fame shall be
An echo and a light unto eternity.

II

Where wert thou, mighty Mother, when he lay,
When thy Son lay, pierced by the shaft which flies
In darkness? where was lorn Urania
When Adonais died? With veiled eyes,
'Mid listening Echoes, in her Paradise
She sate, while one, with soft enamoured breath,
Rekindled all the fading melodies,
With which, like flowers that mock the corse beneath,
He had adorned and hid the coming bulk of death.

III

O, weep for Adonais—he is dead!
Wake, melancholy Mother, wake and weep!
Yet wherefore? Quench within their burning bed
Thy fiery tears, and let thy loud heart keep,
Like his, a mute and uncomplaining sleep;
For he is gone, where all things wise and fair
Descend;—oh, dream not that the amorous Deep
Will yet restore him to the vital air;
Death feeds on his mute voice, and laughs at our despair.

IV

Most musical of mourners, weep again!
Lament anew, Urania!—He died,
Who was the Sire of an immortal strain,
Blind, old, and lonely, when his country's pride,
The priest, the slave, and the libercide,
Trampled and mocked with many a loathed rite
Of lust and blood; he went, unterrified,
Into the gulph of death; but his clear Sprite
Yet reigns o'er earth; the third among the sons of light.

V

Most musical of mourners, weep anew !
Not all to that bright station dared to climb ;
And happier they their happiness who knew,
Whose tapers yet burn through that night of time
In which suns perished ; others more sublime,
Struck by the envious wrath of man or God,
Have sunk, extinct in their refulgent prime ;
And some yet live, treading the thorny road,
Which leads, through toil and hate, to Fame's serene
abode.

VI

But now, thy youngest, dearest one has perished,
The nursling of thy widowhood, who grew,
Like a pale flower by some sad maiden cherished,
And fed with true love tears, instead of dew ;
Most musical of mourners, weep anew !
Thy extreme hope, the loveliest and the last,
The bloom, whose petals, nipped before they blew,
Died on the promise of the fruit, is waste ;
The broken lily lies—the storm is overpast.

VII

To that high Capital, where kingly Death
Keeps his pale court in beauty and decay,
He came ; and bought, with price of purest breath,
A grave among the eternal.—Come away !
Haste, while the vault of blue Italian day
Is yet his fitting charnel-roof ! while still
He lies, as if in dewy sleep he lay ;
Awake him not ! surely he takes his fill
Of deep and liquid rest, forgetful of all ill.

VIII

He will awake no more, oh, never more !—
Within the twilight chamber spreads apace
The shadow of white Death, and at the door
Invisible Corruption waits to trace
His extreme way to her dim dwelling-place ;
The eternal Hunger sits, but pity and awe
Soothe her pale rage, nor dares she to deface
So fair a prey, till darkness, and the law
Of change, shall o'er his sleep the mortal curtain draw.

IX

O, weep for Adonais !—The quick Dreams,
The passion-wingèd Ministers of thought,
Who were his flocks, whom near the living streams
Of his young spirit he fed, and whom he taught
The love which was its music, wander not,—
Wander no more, from kindling brain to brain,
But droop there, whence they sprung ; and mourn
their lot
Round the cold heart, where, after their sweet pain,
They ne'er will gather strength, or find a home again.

X

And one with trembling hands clasps his cold head,
And fans him with her moonlight wings, and cries ;
“ Our love, our hope, our sorrow, is not dead ;
“ See, on the silken fringe of his faint eyes,
“ Like dew upon a sleeping flower, there lies
“ A tear some Dream has loosened from his brain.”
Lost Angel of a ruined Paradise !
She knew not 'twas her own ; as with no stain
She faded, like a cloud which had outwept its rain.

XI

One from a lucid urn of starry dew
Washed his light limbs as if embalming them ;
Another clipped her profuse locks, and threw
The wreath upon him, like an anadem,
Which frozen tears instead of pearls begem ;
Another in her wilful grief would break
Her bow and wingèd reeds, as if to stem
A greater loss with one which was more weak ;
And dull the barbèd fire against his frozen cheek.

XII

Another Splendour on his mouth alit,
That mouth, whence it was wont to draw the breath
Which gave it strength to pierce the guarded wit,
And pass into the panting heart beneath
With lightning and with music : the damp death
Quenched its caress upon his icy lips ;
And, as a dying meteor stains a wreath
Of moonlight vapour, which the cold night clips,
It flushed through his pale limbs, and passed to its
eclipse.

XIII

And others came . . . Desires and Adorations,
Wingèd Persuasions and veiled Destinies,
Splendours, and Glooms, and glimmering Incarnations
Of hopes and fears, and twilight Phantasies ;
And Sorrow, with her family of Sighs,
And Pleasure, blind with tears, led by the gleam
Of her own dying smile instead of eyes,
Came in slow pomp ;—the moving pomp might seem
Like pageantry of mist on an autumnal stream.

XIV

All he had loved, and moulded into thought,
From shape, and hue, and odour, and sweet sound,
Lamented Adonais. Morning sought
Her eastern watch-tower, and her hair unbound,
Wet with the tears which should adorn the ground,
Dimmed the aërial eyes that kindle day ;
Afar the melancholy thunder moaned,
Pale Ocean in unquiet slumber lay,
And the wild winds flew round, sobbing in their dismay.

XV

Lost Echo sits amid the voiceless mountains,
And feeds her grief with his remembered lay,
And will no more reply to winds or fountains,
Or amorous birds perched on the young green spray,
Or herdsman's horn, or bell at closing day ;
Since she can mimic not his lips, more dear
Than those for whose disdain she pined away
Into a shadow of all sounds :—a drear
Murmur, between their songs, is all the woodmen hear.

XVI

Grief made the young Spring wild, and she threw down
Her kindling buds, as if she Autumn were,
Or they dead leaves ; since her delight is flown
For whom should she have waked the sullen year ?
To Phœbus was not Hyacinth so dear
Nor to himself Narcissus, as to both
Thou, Adonais : wan they stand and sere
Amid the faint companions of their youth,
With dew all turned to tears ; odour, to sighing ruth.



GRIEF MADE THE YOUNG SPRING WILD

XVII

Thy spirit's sister, the lorn nightingale,
Mourns not her mate with such melodious pain ;
Not so the eagle, who like thee could scale
Heaven, and could nourish in the sun's domain
Her mighty youth with morning, doth complain,
Soaring and screaming round her empty nest,
As Albion wails for thee : the curse of Cain
Light on his head who pierced thy innocent breast,
And scared the angel soul that was its earthly guest !

XVIII

Ah, woe is me ! Winter is come and gone,
But grief returns with the revolving year ;
The airs and streams renew their joyous tone ;
The ants, the bees, the swallows reappear ;
Fresh leaves and flowers deck the dead Seasons' bier ;
The amorous birds now pair in every brake,
And build their mossy homes in field and brere ;
And the green lizard, and the golden snake,
Like unimprisoned flames, out of their trance awake.

XIX

Through wood and stream and field and hill and Ocean
A quickening life from the Earth's heart has burst
As it has ever done, with change and motion
From the great morning of the world when first
God dawned on Chaos ; in its stream immersed
The lamps of Heaven flash with a softer light ;
All baser things pant with life's sacred thirst ;
Diffuse themselves ; and spend in love's delight
The beauty and the joy of their renewed might.

XX

The leprous corpse touched by this spirit tender
 Exhales itself in flowers of gentle breath ;
 Like incarnations of the stars, when splendour
 Is changed to fragrance, they illumine death
 And mock the merry worm that wakes beneath ;
 Naught we know, dies. Shall that alone which knows
 Be as a sword consumed before the sheath
 By sightless lightning?—th' intense atom glows
 A moment, then is quenched in a most cold repose.

XXI

Alas ; that all we loved of him should be,
 But for our grief, as if it had not been,
 And grief itself be mortal ! Woe is me !
 Whence are we, and why are we ? of what scene
 The actors or spectators ? Great and mean
 Meet massed in death, who lends what life must borrow.
 As long as skies are blue, and fields are green,
 Evening must usher night, night urge the morrow,
 Month follow month with woe, and year wake year to
 sorrow.

XXII

He will awake no more, oh, never more !
 "Wake thou," cried Misery, "childless Mother, rise
 "Out of thy sleep, and slake, in thy heart's core,
 "A wound more fierce than his with tears and sighs."
 And all the Dreams that watched Urania's eyes,
 And all the Echoes whom their sister's song
 Had held in holy silence, cried : "Arise !"
 Swift as a Thought by the snake Memory stung,
 From her ambrosial rest the fading Splendour sprung.

XXIII

She rose like an autumnal Night, that springs
Out of the East, and follows wild and drear
The golden Day, which, on eternal wings,
Even as a ghost abandoning a bier,
Had left the Earth a corpse. Sorrow and fear
So struck, so roused, so rapt Urania ;
So saddened round her like an atmosphere
Of stormy mist ; so swept her on her way
Even to the mournful place where Adonais lay.

XXIV

Out of her secret Paradise she sped,
Through camps and cities rough with stone, and steel,
And human hearts, which to her æry tread
Yielding not, wounded the invisible
Palms of her tender feet where'er they fell :
And barbèd tongues, and thoughts more sharp than
they,
Rent the soft Form they never could repel,
Whose sacred blood, like the young tears of May,
Paved with eternal flowers that undeserving way.

XXV

In the death chamber for a moment Death,
Shamed by the presence of that living Might,
Blushed to annihilation, and the breath
Revisited those lips, and life's pale light
Flashed through those limbs, so late her dear delight.
"Leave me not wild and drear and comfortless,
"As silent lightning leaves the starless night !
"Leave me not !" cried Urania : her distress
Roused Death : Death rose and smiled, and met her
vain caress.

XXVI

"Stay yet awhile! speak to me once again;
"Kiss me, so long but as a kiss may live;
"And in my heartless breast and burning brain
"That word, that kiss shall all thoughts else survive,
"With food of saddest memory kept alive,
"Now thou art dead, as if it were a part
"Of thee, my Adonais! I would give
"All that I am to be as thou now art!
"But I am chained to Time, and cannot thence depart!

XXVII

"Oh gentle child, beautiful as thou wert,
"Why didst thou leave the trodden paths of men
"Too soon, and with weak hands though mighty heart
"Dare the unpastured dragon in his den?
"Defenceless as thou wert, oh where was then
"Wisdom the mirrored shield, or scorn the spear?
"Or hadst thou waited the full cycle, when
"Thy spirit should have filled its crescent sphere,
"The monsters of life's waste had fled from thee like
deer.

XXVIII

"The herded wolves, bold only to pursue;
"The obscene ravens, clamorous o'er the dead;
"The vultures to the conqueror's banner true,
"Who feed where Desolation first has fed,
"And whose wings rain contagion;—how they fled,
"When like Apollo, from his golden bow,
"The Pythian of the age one arrow sped
"And smiled!—The spoilers tempt no second blow;
"They fawn on the proud feet that spurn them lying low.

XXIX

"The sun comes forth, and many reptiles spawn ;
"He sets, and each ephemeral insect then
"Is gathered into death without a dawn,
"And the immortal stars awake again ;
"So is it in the world of living men :
"A godlike mind soars forth, in its delight
"Making earth bare and veiling heaven, and when
"It sinks, the swarms that dimmed or shared its light
"Leave to its kindred lamps the spirit's awful night."

XXX

Thus ceased she : and the mountain-shepherds came,
Their garlands sere, their magic mantles rent ;
The Pilgrim of Eternity, whose fame
Over his living head like Heaven is bent,
An early but enduring monument,
Came, veiling all the lightnings of his song
In sorrow ; from her wilds Ierne sent
The sweetest lyrist of her saddest wrong,
And love taught grief to fall like music from his tongue.

XXXI

Midst others of less note, came one frail Form,
A phantom among men, companionless
As the last cloud of an expiring storm
Whose thunder is its knell ; he, as I guess,
Had gazed on Nature's naked loveliness,
Actaeon-like, and now he fled astray
With feeble steps o'er the world's wilderness,
And his own thoughts, along that rugged way,
Pursued, like raging hounds, their father and their prey.

XXXII

A pardlike Spirit beautiful and swift—
 A Love in desolation masked ;—a Power
 Girt round with weakness ;—it can scarce uplift
 The weight of the superincumbent hour ;
 It is a dying lamp, a falling shower,
 A breaking billow ;—even whilst we speak
 Is it not broken ? On the withering flower
 The killing sun smiles brightly ; on a cheek
 The life can burn in blood, even while the heart may
 break.

XXXIII

His head was bound with pansies overblown,
 And faded violets, white, and pied, and blue ;
 And a light spear topped with a cypress cone,
 Round whose rude shaft dark ivy tresses grew
 Yet dripping with the forest's noonday dew,
 Vibrated, as the ever-beating heart
 Shook the weak hand that grasped it ; of that crew
 He came the last, neglected and apart ;
 A herd-abandoned deer struck by the hunter's dart.

XXXIV

All stood aloof, and at his partial moan
 Smiled through their tears ; well knew that gentle
 band
 Who in another's fate now wept his own ;
 As, in the accents of an unknown land,
 He sung new sorrow ; sad Urania scanned
 The Stranger's mien, and murmured : " who art thou ?"
 He answered not, but with a sudden hand
 Made bare his branded and ensanguined brow,
 Which was like Cain's or Christ's—Oh ! that it should
 be so !

XXXV

What softer voice is hushed over the dead ?
Athwart what brow is that dark mantle thrown ?
What form leans sadly o'er the white death-bed,
In mockery of monumental stone,
The heavy heart heaving without a moan ?
If it be He, who, gentlest of the wise,
Taught, soothed, loved, honoured the departed one,
Let me not vex with inharmonious sighs
The silence of that heart's accepted sacrifice.

XXXVI

Our Adonais has drunk poison—oh !
What deaf and viperous murderer could crown
Life's early cup with such a draft of woe ?
The nameless worm would now itself disown :
It felt, yet could escape the magic tone
Whose prelude held all envy, hate, and wrong,
But what was howling in one breast alone,
Silent with expectation of the song,
Whose master's hand is cold, whose silver lyre unstrung.

XXXVII

Live thou, whose infamy is not thy fame !
Live ! fear no heavier chastisement from me,
Thou noteless blot on a remembered name !
But be thyself, and know thyself to be !
And ever at thy season be thou free
To spill the venom when thy fangs o'erflow :
Remorse and Self-contempt shall cling to thee ;
Hot Shame shall burn upon thy secret brow,
And like a beaten hound tremble thou shalt—as now.

XXXVIII

Nor let us weep that our delight is fled
Far from these carrion kites that scream below ;
He wakes or sleeps with the enduring dead ;
Thou canst not soar where he is sitting now.—
Dust to the dust ! but the pure spirit shall flow
Back to the burning fountain whence it came,
A portion of the Eternal, which must glow
Through time and change, unquenchably the same,
Whilst thy cold embers choke the sordid hearth of
shame.

XXXIX

Peace, peace ! he is not dead, he doth not sleep—
He hath awakened from the dream of life—
'Tis we who, lost in stormy visions, keep
With phantoms an unprofitable strife,
And in mad trance strike with our spirit's knife
Invulnerable nothings.—*We* decay
Like corpses in a charnel ; fear and grief
Convulse us and consume us day by day,
And cold hopes swarm like worms within our living
clay.

XL

He has outsoared the shadow of our night ;
Envy and calumny and hate and pain,
And that unrest which men miscall delight,
Can touch him not and torture not again ;
From the contagion of the world's slow stain
He is secure, and now can never mourn
A heart grown cold, a head grown grey in vain ;
Nor, when the spirit's self has ceased to burn,
With sparkless ashes load an unlamented urn.

XLI

He lives, he wakes—'tis Death is dead, not he ;
Mourn not for Adonais.—Thou young Dawn
Turn all thy dew to splendour, for from thee
The spirit thou lamentest is not gone ;
Ye caverns and ye forests, cease to moan !
Cease ye faint flowers and fountains, and thou Air
Which like a mourning veil thy scarf hadst thrown
O'er the abandoned Earth, now leave it bare
Even to the joyous stars which smile on its despair !

XLII

He is made one with Nature : there is heard
His voice in all her music, from the moan
Of thunder, to the song of night's sweet bird ;
He is a presence to be felt and known
In darkness and in light, from herb and stone,
Spreading itself where'er that Power may move
Which has withdrawn his being to its own ;
Which wields the world with never wearied love,
Sustains it from beneath, and kindles it above.

XLIII

He is a portion of the loveliness
Which once he made more lovely : he doth bear
His part, while the one Spirit's plastic stress
Sweeps through the dull dense world, compelling there
All new successions to the forms they wear ;
Torturing th' unwilling dross that checks its flight
To its own likeness, as each mass may bear ;
And bursting in its beauty and its might
From trees and beasts and men into the Heaven's light.

XLIV

The splendours of the firmament of time
May be eclipsed, but are extinguished not ;
Like stars to their appointed height they climb
And death is a low mist which cannot blot
The brightness it may veil. When lofty thought
Lifts a young heart above its mortal lair,
And love and life contend in it, for what
Shall be its earthly doom, the dead live there
And move like winds of light on dark and stormy air.

XLV

The inheritors of unfulfilled renown
Rose from their thrones, built beyond mortal thought,
Far in the Unapparent. Chatterton
Rose pale, his solemn agony had not
Yet faded from him ; Sidney, as he fought
And as he fell and as he lived and loved
Sublimely mild, a Spirit without spot,
Arose ; and Lucan, by his death approved :
Oblivion as they rose shrank like a thing reproved.

XLVI

And many more, whose names on Earth are dark
But whose transmitted effluence cannot die
So long as fire outlives the parent spark,
Rose, robed in dazzling immortality.
"Thou art become as one of us," they cry,
"It was for thee yon kingless sphere has long
"Swung blind in unascended majesty,
"Silent alone amid an Heaven of Song.
"Assume thy wingèd throne, thou Vesper of our throng !"

XLVII

Who mourns for Adonais? oh come forth
Fond wretch! and know thyself and him aright.
Clasp with thy panting soul the pendulous Earth;
As from a centre, dart thy spirit's light
Beyond all worlds, until its spacious might
Sate the void circumference: then shrink
Even to a point within our day and night;
And keep thy heart light lest it make thee sink
When hope has kindled hope, and lured thee to the brink.

XLVIII

Or go to Rome, which is the sepulchre,
O, not of him, but of our joy: 'tis naught
That ages, empires, and religions there
Lie buried in the ravage they have wrought;
For such as he can lend,—they borrow not
Glory from those who made the world their prey;
And he is gathered to the kings of thought
Who waged contention with their time's decay,
And of the past are all that cannot pass away.

XLIX

Go thou to Rome,—at once the Paradise,
The grave, the city, and the wilderness;
And where its wrecks like shattered mountains rise,
And flowering weeds and fragrant copses dress
The bones of Desolation's nakedness
Pass, till the Spirit of the spot shall lead
Thy footsteps to a slope of green access
Where, like an infant's smile, over the dead,
A light of laughing flowers along the grass is spread.

L

And grey walls moulder round, on which dull Time
Feeds, like slow fire upon a hoary brand ;
And one keen pyramid with wedge sublime,
Pavilions the dust of him who planned
This refuge for his memory, doth stand
Like flame transformed to marble ; and beneath,
A field is spread, on which a newer band
Have pitched in Heaven's smile their camp of death
Welcoming him we lose with scarce extinguished breath.

LI

Here pause : these graves are all too young as yet
To have outgrown the sorrow which consigned
Its charge to each ; and if the seal is set,
Here, on one fountain of a mourning mind,
Break it not thou ! too surely shalt thou find
Thine own well full, if thou returnest home,
Of tears and gall. From the world's bitter wind
Seek shelter in the shadow of the tomb.
What Adonais is, why fear we to become ?

LII

The One remains, the many change and pass ;
Heaven's light forever shines, Earth's shadows fly ;
Life, like a dome of many-coloured glass,
Stains the white radiance of Eternity,
Until Death tramples it to fragments.—Die,
If thou wouldst be with that which thou dost seek !
Follow where all is fled !—Rome's azure sky,
Flowers, ruins, statues, music, words, are weak
The glory they transfuse with fitting truth to speak.

LIII

Why linger, why turn back, why shrink, my Heart?
Thy hopes are gone before : from all things here
They have departed ; thou shouldst now depart !
A light is past from the revolving year,
And man, and woman ; and what still is dear
Attracts to crush, repels to make thee wither.
The soft sky smiles,—the low wind whispers near ;
'Tis Adonais calls ! oh, hasten thither,
No more let Life divide what Death can join together.

LIV

That Light whose smile kindles the Universe,
That Beauty in which all things work and move,
That Benediction which the eclipsing Curse
Of birth can quench not, that sustaining Love
Which, through the web of being blindly wove
By man and beast and earth and air and sea,
Burns bright or dim, as each are mirrors of
The fire for which all thirst, now beams on me,
Consuming the last clouds of cold mortality.

LV

The breath whose might I have invoked in song
Descends on me ; my spirit's bark is driven,
Far from the shore, far from the trembling throng
Whose sails were never to the tempest given ;
The massy earth and spherèd skies are riven !
I am borne darkly, fearfully, afar :
Whilst burning through the inmost veil of Heaven,
The soul of Adonais, like a star,
Beacons from the abode where the Eternal are.



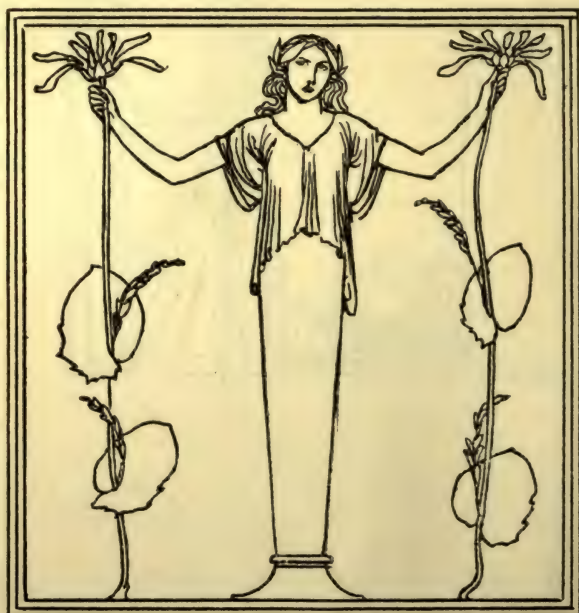


THE TRIUMPH





THE TRIUMPH





OF LIFE





THE TRIUMPH OF LIFE

SWIFT as a spirit hastening to his task
Of glory and of good, the Sun sprang forth
Rejoicing in his splendour, and the mask 3

Of darkness fell from the awakened Earth—
The smokeless altars of the mountain snows
Flamed above crimson clouds, and at the birth 6

Of light, the Ocean's orison arose,
To which the birds tempered their matin lay.
All flowers in field or forest which uncloze 9

Their trembling eyelids to the kiss of day,
Swinging their censers in the element,
With orient incense lit by the new ray 12

Burned slow and unconsumably, and sent
Their odorous sighs up to the smiling air ;
And, in succession due, did continent, 15

Isle, ocean, and all things that in them wear
The form and character of mortal mould,
Rise as the Sun their father rose, to bear 18

Their portion of the toil, which he of old
Took as his own, and then imposed on them :
But I, whom thoughts which must remain untold 21

Had kept as wakeful as the stars that gem
The cone of night, now they were laid asleep
Stretched my faint limbs beneath the hoary stem 24

Which an old chesnut flung athwart the steep
Of a green Apennine : before me fled
The night ; behind me rose the day ; the deep 27

Was at my feet, and Heaven above my head,
When a strange trance over my fancy grew
Which was not slumber, for the shade it spread 30

Was so transparent, that the scene came through
As clear as when a veil of light is drawn
O'er evening hills they glimmer ; and I knew 33

That I had felt the freshness of that dawn,
Bathed in the same cold dew my brow and hair,
And sate as thus upon that slope of lawn 36

Under the self-same bough, and heard as there
The birds, the fountains and the ocean hold
Sweet talk in music through the enamoured air,
And then a vision on my brain was rolled. 40

As in that trance of wondrous thought I lay,
This was the tenour of my waking dream :—
Methought I sate beside a public way 43

Thick strewn with summer dust, and a great stream
Of people there was hurrying to and fro,
Numerous as gnats upon the evening gleam, 46

All hastening onward, yet none seemed to know
Whither he went, or whence he came, or why
He made one of the multitude, and so 49

Was borne amid the crowd, as through the sky
One of the million leaves of summer's bier ;
Old age and youth, manhood and infancy 52

Mixed in one mighty torrent did appear,
 Some flying from the thing they feared, and some
 Seeking the object of another's fear ; 55

And others, as with steps towards the tomb,
 Pored on the trodden worms that crawled beneath,
 And others mournfully within the gloom 58

Of their own shadow walked and called it death ;
 And some fled from it as it were a ghost,
 Half fainting in the affliction of vain breath : 61

But more, with motions which each other crossed,
 Pursued or shunned the shadows the clouds threw,
 Or birds within the noon-day aether lost, 64

Upon that path where flowers never grew,—
 And, weary with vain toil and faint for thirst,
 Heard not the fountains, whose melodious dew 67

Out of their mossy cells for ever burst ;
 Nor felt the breeze which from the forest told
 Of grassy paths and wood-lawns interspersed 70

With overarching elms and caverns cold,
 And violet banks where sweet dreams brood ; but they
 Pursued their serious folly as of old. 73

And, as I gazed, methought that in the way
 The throng grew wilder, as the woods of June
 When the south wind shakes the extinguished day ; 76

And a cold glare, intenser than the noon,
 But icy cold, obscured with blinding light
 The sun, as he the stars. Like the young moon 79

When on the sunlit limits of the night
Her white shell trembles amid crimson air,
And whilst the sleeping tempest gathers might 82

Doth, as the herald of its coming, bear
The ghost of its dead mother, whose dim form
Bends in dark aether from her infant's chair,— 85

So came a chariot on the silent storm
Of its own rushing splendour, and a Shape
So sate within, as one whom years deform, 88

Beneath a dusky hood and double cape,
Crouching within the shadow of a tomb ;
And o'er what seemed the head a cloud-like crape 91

Was bent, a dun and faint aetherial gloom
Tempering the light. Upon the chariot-beam
A Janus-visaged Shadow did assume 94

The guidance of that wonder-wingèd team ;
The shapes which drew it in thick lightnings
Were lost :—I heard alone on the air's soft stream 97

The music of their ever-moving wings.
All the four faces of that charioteer
Had their eyes banded ; little profit brings 100

Speed in the van and blindness in the rear,
Nor then avail the beams that quench the sun
Or that with banded eyes could pierce the sphere 103

Of all that is, has been or will be done ;
So ill was the car guided—but it passed
With solemn speed majestically on. 106

The crowd gave way, and I arose aghast,
Or seemed to rise, so mighty was the trance,
And saw, like clouds upon the thunder-blast,

109

The million with fierce song and maniac dance
Raging around—such seemed the jubilee
As when to greet some conqueror's advance

112

Imperial Rome poured forth her living sea
From senate-house, and forum, and theatre,
When

115

Had bound a yoke, which soon they stooped to bear.
Nor wanted here the just similitude
Of a triumphal pageant, for where'er

118

The chariot rolled, a captive multitude
Was driven ;—all those who had grown old in power
Or misery,—all who had their age subdued

121

By action or by suffering, and whose hour
Was drained to its last sand in weal or woe,
So that the trunk survived both fruit and flower ;—

124

All those whose fame or infamy must grow
Till the great winter lay the form and name
Of this green earth with them for ever low ;—

127

All but the sacred few who could not tame
Their spirits to the conquerors—but, as soon
As they had touched the world with living flame,

130

Fled back like eagles to their native noon,
Or those who put aside the diadem
Of earthly thrones or gems . . .

133

white light
of
shadows

Were there, of Athens or Jerusalem,
Were neither 'mid the mighty captives seen,
Nor 'mid the ribald crowd that followed them, 136

Nor those who went before fierce and obscene.
The wild dance maddens in the van, and those
Who lead it—fleet as shadows on the green, 139

Outspeed the chariot, and without repose
Mix with each other in tempestuous measure
To savage music ; wilder as it grows, 142

They, tortured by their agonizing pleasure,
Convulsed and on the rapid whirlwinds spun
Of that fierce spirit, whose unholy leisure 145

Was soothed by mischief since the world begun,
Throw back their heads and loose their streaming hair ;
And, in their dance round her who dims the sun, 148

Maidens and youths fling their wild arms in air
As their feet twinkle ; they recede, and now
Bending within each other's atmosphere, 151

Kindle invisibly—and as they glow,
Like moths by light attracted and repelled,
Oft to their bright destruction come and go, 154

Till like two clouds into one vale impelled
That shake the mountains when their lightnings mingle
And die in rain—the fiery band which held 157

Their natures, snaps—while the shock still may tingle ;
One falls and then another in the path
Senseless—nor is the desolation single, 160

Yet ere I can say *where*—the chariot hath
Passed over them—nor other trace I find
But as of foam after the ocean's wrath

163

Is spent upon the desert shore ;—behind,
Old men and women, foully disarrayed,
Shake their grey hairs in the insulting wind,

166

And follow in the dance, with limbs decayed,
Seeking to reach the light which leaves them still
Farther behind and deeper in the shade.

169

But not the less with impotence of will
They wheel, though ghastly shadows interpose
Round them and round each other, and fulfil

172

Their work, and in the dust from whence they rose
Sink, and corruption veils them as they lie,
And past in these performs what in those.

175

Struck to the heart by this sad pageantry,
Half to myself I said—"And what is this?
Whose shape is that within the car? And why—" *→ The car is the life*

178

I would have added—"is all here amiss?"
But a voice answered—"Life!"—I turned, and knew
(O Heaven, have mercy on such wretchedness!)

181

That what I thought was an old root which grew
To strange distortion out of the hill-side,
Was indeed one of those deluded crew,

184

And that the grass, which methought hung so wide
And white, was but his thin discoloured hair,
And that the holes he vainly sought to hide

187

Were or had been eyes :—" If thou canst, forbear
To join the dance, which I had well forborne !"
Said the grim Feature (of my thought aware).

190

" I will unfold that which to this deep scorn
Led me and my companions, and relate
The progress of the pageant since the morn ;

193

" If thirst of knowledge shall not then abate,
Follow it thou even to the night, but I
Am weary."—Then like one who with the weight

196

Of his own words is staggered, wearily
He paused ; and ere he could resume, I cried :
" First, who art thou ?"—" Before thy memory,

199

" I feared, loved, hated, suffered, did and died,
And if the spark with which Heaven lit my spirit
Had been with purer nutriment supplied,

202

free " Corruption would not now thus much inherit
Of what was once Rousseau,—nor this disguise
Stain that which ought to have disdained to wear it ;

205

" If I have been extinguished, yet there rise
A thousand beacons from the spark I bore"—

" And who are those chained to the car ?"—" The wise,

208

" The great, the unforgotten,—they who wore
Mitres and helms and crowns, or wreaths of light,
Signs of thought's empire over thought—their lore

211

" Taught them not this, to know themselves ; their might
Could not repress the mystery within,
And for the morn of truth they feigned, deep night

214

"Caught them ere evening."—"Who is he with chin
Upon his breast, and hands crossed on his chain?"

"The child of a fierce hour; he sought to win

"The world, and lost all that it did contain
Of greatness, in its hope destroyed; and more
Of fame and peace than virtue's self can gain

"Without the opportunity which bore
Him on its eagle pinions to the peak
From which a thousand climbers have before

"Fallen, as Napoleon fell."—I felt my cheek
Alter, to see the shadow pass away,
Whose grasp had left the giant world so weak,

That every pigmy kicked it as it lay;
And much I grieved to think how power and will
In opposition rule our mortal day,

And why God made irreconcilable
Good and the means of good; and for despair
I half disdained mine eyes' desire to fill

With the spent vision of the times that were
And scarce have ceased to be.—"Dost thou behold,"
Said my guide, "those spoilers spoiled, Voltaire,

"Frederick, and Paul, Catherine, and Leopold,
And hoary anarchs, demagogues, and sage—
names which the world thinks always old,

"For in the battle Life and they did wage,
She remained conqueror. I was overcome
By my own heart alone, which neither age,

"Nor tears, nor infamy, nor now the tomb
Could temper to its object."—"Let them pass,"
I cried, "the world and its mysterious doom" 244

"Is not so much more glorious than it was,
That I desire to worship those who drew
New figures on its false and fragile glass" 247

"As the old faded."—"Figures ever new
Rise on the bubble, paint them as you may ;
We have but thrown, as those before us threw," 250

"Our shadows on it as it passed away.
But mark how chained to the triumphal chair
The mighty phantoms of an elder day ;" 253

"All that is mortal of great Plato there
Expiates the joy and woe his master knew not ;
The star that ruled his doom was far too fair," 256

'And life, where long that flower of Heaven grew not,
Conquered that heart by love, which gold, or pain,
Or age, or sloth, or slavery could subdue not." 259

"And near him walk the twain,
The tutor and his pupil, whom Dominion
Followed as tame as vulture in a chain." 262

"The world was darkened beneath either pinion
Of him whom from the flock of conquerors
Fame singled out for her thunder-bearing minion ;" 265

"The other long outlived both woes and wars,
Throned in the thoughts of men, and still had kept
The jealous key of truth's eternal doors," 268

"If Bacon's eagle spirit had not leapt
Like lightning out of darkness—he compelled
The Proteus shape of Nature as it slept 271

"To wake, and lead him to the caves that held
The treasure of the secrets of its reign.
See the great bards of elder time, who quelled 274

"The passions which they sung, as by their strain
May well be known : their living melody
Temper its own contagion to the vein 275

"Of those who are infected with it—I
Have suffered what I wrote, or viler pain!
And so my words have seeds of misery— 278

"Even as the deeds of others, not as theirs.")
And then he pointed to a company, 280

'Midst whom I quickly recognized the heirs
Of Caesar's crime, from him to Constantine ;
The anarch chiefs, whose force and murderous snares 283

Had founded many a sceptre-bearing line,
And spread the plague of gold and blood abroad :
And Gregory and John, and men divine, 286

Who rose like shadows between man and God ;
Till that eclipse, still hanging over heaven,
Was worshipped by the world o'er which they strode, 289

For the true sun it quenched—"Their power was given
But to destroy," replied the leader :—"I
Am one of those who have created, even 292

"If it be but a world of agony."—

"Whence camest thou? and whither goest thou?
How did thy course begin?" I said, "and why?" 295

"Mine eyes are sick of this perpetual flow
Of people, and my heart sick of one sad thought—
Speak!"—"Whence I am, I partly seem to know, 298

"And how and by what paths I have been brought
To this dread pass, methinks even thou mayst guess;—
Why this should be, my mind can compass not; 301

"Whither the conqueror hurries me, still less;—
But follow thou, and from spectator turn
Actor or victim in this wretchedness, 304

"And what thou wouldst be taught I then may learn
From thee. Now listen:—In the April prime,
When all the forest tips began to burn 307

"With kindling green, touched by the azure clime
Of the young season, I was laid asleep
Under a mountain, which from unknown time 310

"Had yawned into a cavern, high and deep;
And from it came a gentle rivulet,
Whose water, like clear air, in its calm sweep 313

"Bent the soft grass, and kept for ever wet
The stems of the sweet flowers, and filled the grove
With sounds, which whoso hears must needs forget 316

"All pleasure and all pain, all hate and love,
Which they had known before that hour of rest;
A sleeping mother then would dream not of 319

" Her only child who died upon the breast
At eventide—a king would mourn no more
The crown of which his brows were dispossessed 322

" When the sun lingered o'er his ocean floor,
To gild his rival's new prosperity.
Thou wouldst forget thus vainly to deplore 325

" Ills, which if ills can find no cure from thee,
The thought of which no other sleep will quell,
Nor other music blot from memory, 328

" So sweet and deep is the oblivious spell ;
And whether life had been before that sleep — 331
The heaven which I imagine, or a hell

" Like this harsh world in which I wake to weep, — 334
I know not. I arose, and for a space
The scene of woods and waters seemed to keep,

" Though it was now broad day, a gentle trace — 337
Of light diviner than the common sun
Sheds on the common earth, and all the place

" Was filled with magic sounds woven into one
Oblivious melody, confusing sense
Amid the gliding waves and shadows dun ; 340

" And, as I looked, the bright omnipresence
Of morning through the orient cavern flowed,
And the sun's image radiantly intense 343

" Burned on the waters of the well that glowed
Like gold, and threaded all the forest's maze
With winding paths of emerald fire ; there stood 346

" Amid the sun, as he amid the blaze
Of his own glory, on the vibrating
Floor of the fountain, paved with flashing rays, 349

" A Shape all light, which with one hand did fling
Dew on the earth, as if she were the dawn,
And the invisible rain did ever sing 352

" A silver music on the mossy lawn ;
And still before me on the dusky grass
Iris her many-coloured scarf had drawn : 355

" In her right hand she bore a crystal glass,
Mantling with bright Nepenthe ; the fierce splendour
Fell from her as she moved under the mass 358

" Of the deep cavern, and with palms so tender,
Their tread broke not the mirror of its billow,
Glided along the river, and did bend her 361

" Head under the dark boughs, till like a willow,
Her fair hair swept the bosom of the stream
That whispered with delight to be its pillow. 364

" As one enamoured is upborne in dream
O'er lily-paven lakes 'mid silver mist,
To wondrous music, so this shape might seem 367

" Partly to tread the waves with feet which kissed
The dancing foam, partly to glide along
The air which roughened the moist amethyst, 370

" Or the faint morning beams that fell among
The trees, or the soft shadows of the trees ;
And her feet, ever to the ceaseless song 373

"Of leaves, and winds, and waves, and birds, and bees,
And falling drops, moved in a measure new
Yet sweet, as on the summer evening breeze,

376

"Up from the lake a shape of golden dew
Between two rocks, athwart the rising moon,
Dances i' the wind, where never eagle flew ;

379

"And still her feet, no less than the sweet tune
To which they moved, seemed as they moved to blot
The thoughts of him who gazed on them ; and soon

382

"All that was, seemed as if it had been not ;
And all the gazer's mind was strewn beneath
Her feet like embers ; and she, thought by thought,

385

"Trampled its sparks into the dust of death ;
As day upon the threshold of the east
Treads out the lamps of night, until the breath

388

"Of darkness re-illumine even the least
Of heaven's living eyes—like day she came,
Making the night a dream ; and ere she ceased

391

"To move, as one between desire and shame
Suspended, I said—'If, as it doth seem,
Thou comest from the realm without a name,

394

"'Into this valley of perpetual dream,
Show whence I came, and where I am, and why—
Pass not away upon the passing stream.'

397

"'Arise and quench thy thirst,' was her reply.
And as a shut lily stricken by the wand
Of dewy morning's vital alchemy

400

" I rose ; and, bending at her sweet command,
Touched with faint lips the cup she raised,
And suddenly my brain became as sand

403

" Where the first wave had more than half erased
The track of deer on desert Labrador ;
Whilst the wolf, from which they fled amazed,

406

" Leaves his stamp visibly upon the shore,
Until the second bursts ;—so on my sight
Burst a new vision, never seen before,

409

" And the fair shape waned in the coming light,
As veil by veil the silent splendour drops
From Lucifer, amid the chrysolite

412

" Of sun-rise ere it tinge the mountain tops ;
And as the presence of that fairest planet,
Although unseen, is felt by one who hopes

415

" That his day's path may end as he began it,
In that star's smile, whose light is like the scent
Of a jonquil when evening breezes fan it,

418

" Or the soft note in which his dear lament
The Brescian shepherd breathes, or the caress
That turned his weary slumber to content ;

421

" So knew I in that light's severe excess
The presence of that shape which on the stream
Moved, as I moved along the wilderness,

424

" More dimly than a day-appearing dream,
The ghost of a forgotten form of sleep ;
A light of heaven, whose half-extinguished beam

427

"Through the sick day in which we wake to weep,
Glimmers, for ever sought, for ever lost ;
So did that shape its obscure tenour keep

430

"Beside my path, as silent as a ghost ;
But the new Vision, and the cold bright car,
With solemn speed and stunning music, crossed

433

"The forest, and as if from some dread war
Triumphantly returning, the loud million
Fiercely extolled the fortune of her star.

436

"A moving arch of victory, the vermillion
And green and azure plumes of Iris had
Built high over her wind-winged pavilion,

439

"And underneath aetherial glory clad
The wilderness, and far before her flew
The tempest of the splendour, which forbade

442

"Shadows to fall from leaf and stone ; the crew
Seemed, in that light, like atomies to dance
Within a sunbeam ;—some upon the new

445

"Embroidery of flowers, that did enhance
The grassy vesture of the desert, played,
Forgetful of the chariot's swift advance ;

448

"Others stood gazing, till within the shade
Of the great mountain its light left them dim
Others outspeeded it ; and others made

451

"Circles around it, like the clouds that swim
Round the high moon in a bright sea of air ;
And more did follow, with exulting hymn,

454

"The chariot and the captives fettered there :—
But all like bubbles on an eddying flood
Fell into the same track at last, and were

457

"Borne onward.—I among the multitude
Was swept—me, sweetest flowers delayed not long ;
Me, not the shadow nor the solitude ;

460

"Me, not that falling stream's Lethæan song ;
Me, not the phantom of that early form,
Which moved upon its motion—but among

"The thickest billows of that living storm
I plunged, and bared my bosom to the clime
Of that cold light, whose airs too soon deform.

466

"Before the chariot had begun to climb
The opposing steep of that mysterious dell,
Behold a wonder worthy of the rhyme

469

"Of him who from the lowest depths of hell,
Through every paradise and through all glory,
Love led serene, and who returned to tell

472

"The words of hate and awe ; the wondrous story
How all things are transfigured except Love ;
For deaf as is a sea, which wrath makes hoary,

475

"The world can hear not the sweet notes that move
The sphere whose light is melody to lovers—
A wonder worthy of his rhyme.—The grove

48

"Grew dense with shadows to its inmost covers,
The earth was grey with phantoms, and the air
Was peopled with dim forms, as when there hovers

481

"A flock of vampire bats before the glare
Of the tropic sun, bringing, ere evening,
Strange night upon some Indian isle ;—thus were 484

"Phantoms diffused around ; and some did fling
Shadows of shadows, yet unlike themselves,
Behind them ; some like eaglets on the wing 487

"Were lost in the white day ; others like elves
Danced in a thousand unimagined shapes
Upon the sunny streams and grassy shelves ; 490

"And others sate chattering like restless apes
On vulgar hands,
Some made a cradle of the ermined capes 493

"Of kingly mantles ; some across the tiar
Of pontiffs sate like vultures ; others played
Under the crown which girt with empire 496

"A baby's or an idiot's brow, and made
Their nests in it. The old anatomies — from at home
Sate hatching their bare broods under the shade 499

"Of daemon wings, and laughed from their dead eyes
To re-assume the delegated power,
Arrayed in which those worms did monarchize, 502

Who made this earth their charnel. Others more
Humble, like falcons, sate upon the fist
Of common men, and round their heads did soar ; 505

"Or like small gnats and flies, as thick as mist
On evening marshes, thronged about the brow
Of lawyers, statesmen, priest and theorist ;— 508

" And others, like discoloured flakes of snow
On fairest bosoms and the sunniest hair,
Fell, and were melted by the youthful glow 511

" Which they extinguished ; and, like tears, they were
A veil to those from whose faint lids they rained 515
In drops of sorrow. I became aware

" Of whence those forms proceeded which thus stained
The track in which we moved. After brief space,
From every form the beauty slowly waned ; 518

" From every firmest limb and fairest face
The strength and freshness fell like dust, and left 521
The action and the shape without the grace

" Of life. The marble brow of youth was cleft
With care ; and in those eyes where once hope shone,
Desire, like a lioness bereft 524

" Of her last cub, glared ere it died ; each one
Of that great crowd sent forth incessantly
These shadows, numerous as the dead leaves blown 527

" In autumn evening from a poplar tree.
Each like himself and like each other were
At first ; but some distorted seemed to be 530

" Obscure clouds, moulded by the casual air ;
And of this stuff the car's creative ray
Wrought all the busy phantoms that were there, 533

" As the sun shapes the clouds ; thus on the way
Mask after mask fell from the countenance
And form of all ; and long before the day 536

"Was old, the joy which waked like heaven's glance
The sleepers in the oblivious valley, died ;
And some grew weary of the ghastly dance,

"And fell, as I have fallen, by the way-side ;—
Those soonest from whose forms most shadows passed,
And least of strength and beauty did abide.

"Then, 'What is life?' I cried."—









S

PROMETHEVS
VNBOVND

A
LYRICAL DRAMA
IN FOVR ACTS



AVDISNE HAEC AMPHIARAE,
SVB TERRAM ABDITE.

S



PROMETHEUS.
DEMOGORGON.
JUPITER.
THE EARTH.
OCEAN.
APOLLO.
MERCURY.
HERCULES.

ASIA
PANTHEA } Oceanides.
IONE }

THE PHANTASM OF JUPITER.
THE SPIRIT OF THE EARTH.
THE SPIRIT OF THE MOON.
SPIRITS OF THE HOURS.
SPIRITS. ECHOES. FAUNS. FURIES.



MERCURY CHIDES THE FURIES



SCENE, *A Ravine of Icy Rocks in the Indian Caucasus.*
PROMETHEUS is discovered bound to the Precipice.
PANTHEA and IONE are seated at his feet. TIME,
Night. During the Scene, Morning slowly breaks.

Prometheus. Monarch of Gods and Daemons, and all
Spirits

But One, who throng those bright and rolling worlds
Which Thou and I alone of living things
Behold with sleepless eyes! regard this Earth
Made multitudinous with thy slaves, whom thou
Requiest for knee-worship, prayer, and praise,
And toil, and hecatombs of broken hearts,
With fear and self-contempt and barren hope.
Whilst me, who am thy foe, eyeless in hate,
Hast thou made reign and triumph, to thy scorn,
O'er mine own misery and thy vain revenge.
Three thousand years of sleep-unsheltered hours,
And moments aye divided by keen pangs
Till they seemed years, torture and solitude,
Scorn and despair,—these are mine empire.
More glorious far than that which thou surveyest
From thine unenvied throne, O, Mighty God!
Almighty, had I deigned to share the shame

Of thine ill tyranny, and hung not here
Nailed to this wall of eagle-baffling mountain,
Black, wintry, dead, unmeasured ; without herb,
Insect, or beast, or shape or sound of life.
Ah me ! alas, pain, pain ever, for ever !

No change, no pause, no hope ! Yet I endure.
I ask the Earth, have not the mountains felt ?
I ask yon Heaven, the all-beholding Sun,
Has it not seen ? The Sea, in storm or calm,
Heaven's ever-changing Shadow, spread below,
Have its deaf waves not heard my agony ?
Ah me ! alas, pain, pain ever, for ever !

The crawling glaciers pierce me with the spears
Of their moon-freezing crystals, the bright chains
Eat with their burning cold into my bones.
Heaven's wingèd hound, polluting from thy lips
His beak in poison not his own, tears up
My heart ; and shapeless sights come wandering by,
The ghastly people of the realm of dream,
Mocking me : and the Earthquake-fiends are charged
To wrench the rivets from my quivering wounds
When the rocks split and close again behind :
While from their loud abysses howling throng
The genii of the storm, urging the rage
Of whirlwind, and afflict me with keen hail.
And yet to me welcome is day and night,
Whether one breaks the hoar-frost of the morn,
Or starry, dim, and slow, the other climbs
The leaden-coloured east ; for then they lead
The wingless, crawling hours, one among whom
—As some dark Priest hales the reluctant victim—
Shall drag thee, cruel King, to kiss the blood
From these pale feet, which then might trample thee
If they disdained not such a prostrate slave.
Disdain ! Ah no ! I pity thee. What ruin

Will hunt thee undefended through the wide Heaven!
How will thy soul, cloven to its depth with terror,
Gape like a hell within! I speak in grief,
Not exultation, for I hate no more,
As then ere misery made me wise. The curse
Once breathed on thee I would recall. Ye Mountains,
Whose many-voicèd Echoes, through the mist
Of cataracts, flung the thunder of that spell!
Ye icy springs, stagnant with wrinkling frost,
Which vibrated to hear me, and then crept
Shuddering through India! Thou serenest Air,
Through which the Sun walks burning without beams!
And ye swift Whirlwinds, who on poisèd wings
Hung mute and moveless o'er yon hushed abyss,
As thunder, louder than your own, made rock
The orbèd world! If then my words had power,
Though I am changed so that aught evil wish
Is dead within; although no memory be
Of what is hate, let them not lose it now!
What was that curse? for ye all heard me speak.

First Voice: from the Mountains.

Thrice three hundred thousand years
O'er the Earthquake's couch we stood:
Oft, as men convulsed with fears,
We trembled in our multitude.

Second Voice: from the Springs.

Thunder-bolts had parched our water,
We had been stained with bitter blood,
And had run mute, 'mid shrieks of slaughter,
Through a city and a solitude

Third Voice: from the Air.

I had clothed, since Earth uprose,
Its wastes in colours not their own,
And oft had my serene repose
Been cloven by many a rending groan.

Fourth Voice : from the Whirlwinds.

We had soared beneath these mountains
Unresting ages ; nor had thunder,
Nor yon volcano's flaming fountains,
Nor any power above or under
Ever made us mute with wonder.

First Voice.

But never bowed our snowy crest
As at the voice of thine unrest.

Second Voice.

Never such a sound before
To the Indian waves we bore.
A pilot asleep on the howling sea
Leaped up from the deck in agony,
And heard, and cried, " Ah, woe is me !"
And died as mad as the wild waves be.

Third Voice.

By such dread words from Earth to Heaven
My still realm was never riven :
When its wound was closed, there stood
Darkness o'er the day like blood.

Fourth Voice.

And we shrank back : for dreams of ruin
To frozen caves our flight pursuing
Made us keep silence—thus—and thus—
Though silence is a hell to us.

The Earth. The tongueless Caverns of the craggy
hills

Cried, " Misery !" then ; the hollow Heaven replied
" Misery !" And the Ocean's purple waves,
Climbing the land, howled to the lashing winds,
And the pale nations heard it, " Misery !"

Prometheus. I hear a sound of voices : not the voice

Which I gave forth. Mother, thy sons and thou
 Scorn him, without whose all-enduring will
 Beneath the fierce omnipotence of Jove,
 Both they and thou had vanished, like thin mist
 Unrolled on the morning wind. Know ye not me,
 The Titan? He who made his agony
 The barrier to your else all-conquering foe?
 Oh, rock-embosomed lawns, and snow-fed streams,
 Now seen athwart frore vapours, deep below,
 Through whose o'ershadowing woods I wandered once
 With Asia, drinking life from her loved eyes;
 Why scorns the spirit which informs ye, now
 To commune with me? me alone, who checked,
 As one who checks a fiend-drawn charioteer,
 The falsehood and the force of him who reigns
 Supreme, and with the groans of pining slaves
 Fills your dim glens and liquid wildernesses:
 Why answer ye not, still? Brethren!

The Earth.

They dare not

Prometheus. Who dares? for I would hear that curse
 again.

Ha, what an awful whisper rises up!
 'Tis scarce like sound: it tingles through the frame
 As lightning tingles, hovering ere it strike.
 Speak, Spirit! from thine inorganic voice
 I only know that thou art moving near
 And love. How cursed I him?

The Earth.

How canst thou hear

Who knowest not the language of the dead?

Prometheus. Thou art a living spirit: speak as they.

The Earth. I dare not speak like life, lest Heaven's
 fell King

Should hear, and link me to some wheel of pain
 More torturing than the one whereon I roll.
 Subtle thou art and good, and though the Gods
 Hear not this voice, yet thou art more than God
 Being wise and kind: earnestly hearken now.

Prometheus. Obscurely through my brain, like shadows
dim,

Sweep awful thoughts, rapid and thick. I feel
Faint, like one mingled in entwining love ;
Yet 'tis not pleasure.

The Earth. No, thou canst not hear :
Thou art immortal, and this tongue is known
Only to those who die.

Prometheus. And what art thou,
O, melancholy Voice ?

The Earth. I am the Earth,
Thy mother ; she within whose stony veins,
To the last fibre of the loftiest tree
Whose thin leaves trembled in the frozen air,
Joy ran, as blood within a living frame,
When thou didst from her bosom, like a cloud
Of glory, arise, a spirit of keen joy !
And at thy voice her pining sons uplifted
Their prostrate brows from the polluting dust,
And our almighty Tyrant with fierce dread
Grew pale, until his thunder chained thee here.
Then, see those million worlds which burn and roll
Around us : their inhabitants beheld
My spherèd light wane in wide Heaven ; the sea
Was lifted by strange tempest, and new fire
From earthquake-rifted mountains of bright snow
Shook its portentous hair beneath Heaven's frown ;
Lightning and Inundation vexed the plains ;
Blue thistles bloomed in cities ; foodless toads
Within voluptuous chambers panting crawled :
When Plague had fallen on man, and beast, and worm,
And Famine ; and black blight on herb and tree ;
And in the corn, and vines, and meadow-grass,
Teemed ineradicable poisonous weeds
Draining their growth, for my wan breast was dry
With grief ; and the thin air, my breath, was stained
With the contagion of a mother's hate

Breathed on her child's destroyer ; aye, I heard
Thy curse, the which, if thou rememberest not,
Yet my innumerable seas and streams,
Mountains, and caves, and winds, and yon wide air,
And the inarticulate people of the dead,
Preserve, a treasured spell. We meditate
In secret joy and hope those dreadful words
But dare not speak them.

Prometheus.

Venerable mother !

All else who live and suffer take from thee
Some comfort ; flowers, and fruits, and happy sounds,
And love, though fleeting ; these may not be mine.
But mine own words, I pray, deny me not.

The Earth. They shall be told. Ere Babylon was
dust,

The Magus Zoroaster, my dead child,
Met his own image walking in the garden.
That apparition, sole of men, he saw.
For know there are two worlds of life and death :
One that which thou beholdest ; but the other
Is underneath the grave, where do inhabit
The shadows of all forms that think and live
Till death unite them and they part no more ;
Dreams and the light imaginings of men,
And all that faith creates or love desires,
Terrible, strange, sublime and beauteous shapes.
There thou art, and dost hang, a writhing shade,
'Mid whirlwind-peopled mountains ; all the gods
Are there, and all the powers of nameless worlds,
Vast, sceptred phantoms ; heroes, men, and beasts ;
And Demogorgon, a tremendous gloom ;
And he, the supreme Tyrant, on his throne
Of burning gold. Son, one of these shall utter
The curse which all remember. Call at will
Thine own ghost, or the ghost of Jupiter,
Hades or Typhon, or what mightier Gods
From all-prolific Evil, since thy ruin,

Have sprung, and trampled on my prostrate sons.
 Ask, and they must reply : so the revenge
 Of the Supreme may sweep through vacant shades;
 As rainy wind through the abandoned gate
 Of a fallen palace.

Prometheus. Mother, let not aught
 Of that which may be evil, pass again
 My lips, or those of aught resembling me.
 Phantasm of Jupiter, arise, appear !

Ione.

My wings are folded o'er mine ears :
 My wings are crossèd o'er mine eyes :
 Yet through their silver shade appears,
 And through their lulling plumes arise,
 A Shape, a throng of sounds ;
 May it be no ill to thee
 O thou of many wounds !
 Near whom, for our sweet sister's sake,
 Ever thus we watch and wake.

Panthea.

The sound is of whirlwind underground,
 Earthquake, and fire, and mountains cloven ;
 The shape is awful like the sound,
 Clothed in dark purple, star-inwoven.
 A sceptre of pale gold
 To stay steps proud, o'er the slow cloud
 His veined hand doth hold.
 Cruel he looks, but calm and strong,
 Like one who does, not suffers wrong.

Phantasm of Jupiter. Why have the secret powers of
 this strange world
 Driven me, a frail and empty phantom, hither
 On direst storms ? What unaccustomed sounds
 Are hovering on my lips, unlike the voice

With which our pallid race hold ghastly talk
In darkness? And, proud sufferer, who art thou?

Prometheus. Tremendous Image, as thou art must be
He whom thou shadowest forth. I am his foe,
The Titan. Speak the words which I would hear,
Although no thought inform thine empty voice.

The Earth. Listen! And though your echoes must
be mute,

Grey mountains, and old woods, and haunted springs,
Prophetic caves, and isle-surrounding streams,
Rejoice to hear what yet ye cannot speak.

Phantasm. A spirit seizes me and speaks within :
It tears me as fire tears a thunder-cloud.

Panthea. See, how he lifts his mighty looks, the Heaven
Darkens above.

Ione. He speaks! O shelter me!

Prometheus. I see the curse on gestures proud and cold,
And looks of firm defiance, and calm hate,
And such despair as mocks itself with smiles,
Written as on a scroll : yet speak : Oh, speak!

Phantasm.

Fiend, I defy thee! with a calm, fixed mind,
All that thou canst inflict I bid thee do ;
Foul Tyrant both of Gods and Human-kind,
One only being shalt thou not subdue.
Rain then thy plagues upon me here,
Ghastly disease, and frenzying fear ;
And let alternate frost and fire
Eat into me, and be thine ire
Lightning, and cutting hail, and legioned forms
Of furies, driving by upon the wounding storms.

Aye, do thy worst. Thou art omnipotent.

O'er all things but thyself I gave thee power,
And my own will. Be thy swift mischiefs sent
To blast mankind, from yon aetherial tower.

Let thy malignant spirit move
 In darkness over those I love :
 On me and mine I imprecate
 The utmost torture of thy hate ;
 And thus devote to sleepless agony,
 This undeclying head while thou must reign on high.

But thou, who art the God and Lord : O, thou,
 Who fillest with thy soul this world of woe,
 To whom all things of Earth and Heaven do bow
 In fear and worship : all-prevailing foe !
 I curse thee ! let a sufferer's curse
 Clasp thee, his torturer, like remorse ;
 Till thy Infinity shall be
 A robe of envenomed agony ;
 And thine Omnipotence a crown of pain,
 To cling like burning gold round thy dissolving brain.

Heap on thy soul, by virtue of this Curse,
 Ill deeds, then be thou damned, beholding good ;
 Both infinite as is the universe,
 And thou, and thy self-torturing solitude.
 An awful image of calm power
 Though now thou sittest, let the hour
 Come, when thou must appear to be
 That which thou art internally.
 And after many a false and fruitless crime
 Scorn track thy lagging fall through boundless space and
 time.

Prometheus. Were these my words, O, Parent ?

The Earth. They were thine.

Prometheus. It doth repent me : words are quick and
 vain ;

Grief for awhile is blind, and so was mine.
 I wish no living thing to suffer pain.

The Earth.

Misery, Oh misery to me,

That Jove at length should vanquish thee.
Wail, howl aloud, Land and Sea,
The Earth's rent heart shall answer ye.
Howl, Spirits of the living and the dead,
Your refuge, your defence lies fallen and vanquishèd.

First Echo.

Lies fallen and vanquishèd !

Second Echo.

Fallen and vanquishèd !

Ione.

Fear not : 'tis but some passing spasm ;
The Titan is unvanquished still.
But see, where through the azure chasm
Of yon forked and snowy hill
Trampling the slant winds on high
With golden-sandalled feet, that glow
Under plumes of purple dye,
Like rose-ensanguined ivory,
A Shape comes now,
Stretching on high from his right hand
A serpent-cinctured wand.

Panthea.

'Tis Jove's world-wandering herald, Mercury.

Ione.

And who are those with hydra tresses
And iron wings that climb the wind,
Whom the frowning God represses
Like vapours steaming up behind,
Clanging loud, an endless crowd—

Panthea.

These are Jove's tempest-walking hounds,
Whom he gluts with groans and blood,
When charioted on sulphurous cloud
He bursts Heaven's bounds.

Ione.

Are they now led, from the thin dead
On new pangs to be fed?

Panthea. The Titan looks as ever, firm, not proud.

First Fury. Ha! I scent life!

Second Fury. Let me but look into his eyes!

Third Fury. The hope of torturing him smells like a
heap

Of corpses to a death-bird after battle.

First Fury. Darest thou delay, O Herald! take cheer,
Hounds

Of Hell: what if the Son of Maia soon
Should make us food and sport—who can please long
The Omnipotent?

Mercury. Back to your towers of iron,
And gnash, beside the streams of fire and wail,
Your foodless teeth. Geryon, arise! and Gorgon,
Chimæra, and thou Sphinx, subtlest of fiends
Who ministered to Thebes Heaven's poisoned wine,
Unnatural love, and more unnatural hate:
These shall perform your task.

First Fury. Oh, mercy! mercy!
We die with our desire: drive us not back!

Mercury. Crouch then in silence.

Awful Sufferer

To thee unwilling, most unwillingly
I come, by the great Father's will driven down,
To execute a doom of new revenge.
Alas! I pity thee, and hate myself
That I can do no more: aye from thy sight
Returning, for a season, Heaven seems Hell,
So thy worn form pursues me night and day,
Smiling reproach. Wise art thou, firm and good,
But vainly wouldst stand forth alone in strife
Against the Omnipotent; as yon clear lamps
That measure and divide the weary years

From which there is no refuge, long have taught
And long must teach. Even now thy Torturer arms
With the strange might of unimagined pains
The powers who scheme slow agonies in Hell,
And my commission is to lead them here,
Or what more subtle, foul, or savage fiends
People the abyss, and leave them to their task.
Be it not so! there is a secret known
To thee, and to none else of living things,
Which may transfer the sceptre of wide Heaven,
The fear of which perplexes the Supreme:
Clothe it in words, and bid it clasp his throne
In intercession; bend thy soul in prayer,
And like a suppliant in some gorgeous fane,
Let the will kneel within thy haughty heart:
For benefits and meek submission tame
The fiercest and the mightiest.

Prometheus. Evil minds
Change good to their own nature. I gave all
He has; and in return he chains me here
Years, ages, night and day: whether the Sun
Split my parched skin, or in the moony night
The crystal-wingèd snow cling round my hair:
Whilst my belovèd race is trampled down
By his thought-executing ministers.
Such is the tyrant's recompense: 'tis just:
He who is evil can receive no good;
And for a world bestowed, or a friend lost,
He can feel hate, fear, shame; not gratitude:
He but requites me for his own misdeed.
Kindness to such is keen reproach, which breaks
With bitter stings the light sleep of Revenge.
Submission, thou dost know I cannot try:
For what submission but that fatal word,
The death-seal of mankind's captivity,
Like the Sicilian's hair-suspended sword,
Which trembles o'er his crown, would he accept,

Or could I yield? Which yet I will not yield.
 Let others flatter Crime, where it sits throned
 In brief Omnipotence: secure are they:
 For Justice, when triumphant, will weep down
 Pity, not punishment, on her own wrongs,
 Too much avenged by those who err. I wait,
 Enduring thus, the retributive hour
 Which since we spake is even nearer now.
 But hark, the hell-hounds clamour: fear delay:
 Behold! Heaven lowers under thy Father's frown.

Mercury. Oh, that we might be spared,—I to inflict
 And thou to suffer! Once more answer me:
 Thou knowest not the period of Jove's power?

Prometheus. I know but this, that it must come.

Mercury. Alas!
 Thou canst not count thy years to come of pain?

Prometheus. They last while Jove must reign: nor
 more, nor less
 Do I desire or fear.

Mercury. Yet pause, and plunge
 Into Eternity, where recorded time,
 Even all that we imagine, age on age,
 Seems but a point, and the reluctant mind
 Flags wearily in its unending flight,
 Till it sink, dizzy, blind, lost, shelterless;
 Perchance it has not numbered the slow years
 Which thou must spend in torture, unreprieved?

Prometheus. Perchance no thought can count them:
 yet they pass.

Mercury. If thou might'st dwell among the Gods the
 while
 Lapped in voluptuous joy?

Prometheus. I would not quit
 This bleak ravine, these unrepentant pains.

Mercury. Alas! I wonder at, yet pity thee.

Prometheus. Pity the self-despising slaves of Heaven,
 Not me, within whose mind sits peace serene,

As light in the sun, throned : how vain is talk !
Call up the fiends.

Ione. O, sister, look ! White fire
Has cloven to the roots yon huge snow-loaded cedar ;
How fearfully God's thunder howls behind !

Mercury. I must obey his words and thine : alas !
Most heavily remorse hangs at my heart !

Panthea. See where the child of Heaven, with wingèd
feet,
Runs down the slanted sunlight of the dawn.

Ione. Dear sister, close thy plumes over thine eyes
Lest thou behold and die : they come : they come
Blackening the birth of day with countless wings,
And hollow underneath, like death.

First Fury. Prometheus !

Second Fury. Immortal Titan !

Third Fury. Champion of Heaven's slaves !

Prometheus. He whom some dreadful voice invokes is
here,

Prometheus, the chained Titan. Horrible forms,
What and who are ye ? Never yet there came
Phantasms so foul through monster-teeming Hell
From the all-miscreative brain of Jove ;
Whilst I behold such execrable shapes,
Methinks I grow like what I contemplate,
And laugh and stare in loathsome sympathy.

First Fury. We are the ministers of pain, and fear,
And disappointment, and mistrust, and hate,
And clinging crime ; and as lean dogs pursue
Through wood and lake some struck and sobbing fawn,
We track all things that weep, and bleed, and live,
When the great King betrays them to our will.

Prometheus. Oh ! many fearful natures in one name,
I know ye ; and these lakes and echoes know
The darkness and the clangour of your wings.
But why more hideous than your loathèd selves
Gather ye up in legions from the deep ?

Second Fury. We knew not that: Sisters, rejoice,
rejoice!

Prometheus. Can aught exult in its deformity?

Second Fury. The beauty of delight makes lovers
glad,

Gazing on one another: so are we.

As from the rose which the pale priestess kneels

To gather for her festal crown of flowers

The ærial crimson falls, flushing her cheek,

So from our victim's destined agony

The shade which is our form invests us round;

Else we are shapeless as our mother Night.

Prometheus. I laugh your power, and his who sent you
here,

To lowest scorn. Pour forth the cup of pain.

First Fury. Thou thinkest we will rend thee bone from
bone,

And nerve from nerve, working like fire within?

Prometheus. Pain is my element, as hate is thine;

Ye rend me now: I care not.

Second Fury. Dost imagine

We will but laugh into thy lidless eyes?

Prometheus. I weigh not what ye do, but what ye suffer,
Being evil. Cruel was the power which called
You, or aught else so wretched, into light.

Third Fury. Thou think'st we will live through thee,
one by one,

Like animal life, and though we can obscure not

The soul which burns within, that we will dwell

Beside it, like a vain loud multitude

Vexing the self-content of wisest men:

That we will be dread thought beneath thy brain,

And foul desire round thine astonished heart,

And blood within thy labyrinthine veins

Crawling like agony.

Prometheus. Why, ye are thus now;

Yet I am king over myself, and rule

The torturing and conflicting throngs within,
As Jove rules you when Hell grows mutinous.

Chorus of Furies.

From the ends of the earth, from the ends of the earth,
Where the night has its grave and the morning its birth,
Come, come, come !

Oh, ye who shake hills with the scream of your mirth,
When cities sink howling in ruin ; and ye
Who with wingless footsteps trample the sea,
And close upon Shipwreck and Famine's track,
Sit chattering with joy on the foodless wreck ;

Come, come, come !

Leave the bed, low, cold, and red,

Strewed beneath a nation dead ;

Leave the hatred, as in ashes

Fire is left for future burning :

It will burst in bloodier flashes

When ye stir it, soon returning :

Leave the self-contempt implanted

In young spirits, sense-enchanted,

Misery's yet unkindled fuel :

Leave Hell's secrets half unchanted

To the maniac dreamer ; cruel

More than ye can be with hate

Is he with fear.

Come, come, come !

We are steaming up from Hell's wide gate
And we burthen the blast of the atmosphere
But vainly we toil till ye come here.

Ione. Sister, I hear the thunder of new wings.

Panthea. These solid mountains quiver with the sound
Even as the tremulous air : their shadows make
The space within my plumes more black than night.

First Fury.

Your call was as a wingèd car
Driven on whirlwinds fast and far ;
It rapt us from red gulphs of war.

Second Fury.

From wide cities, famine-wasted ;

Third Fury.

Groans half heard, and blood untasted ;

Fourth Fury.

Kingly conclaves stern and cold,
Where blood with gold is bought and sold ;

Fifth Fury.

From the furnace, white and hot,
In which—

A Fury.

Speak not : whisper not :
I know all that ye would tell,
But to speak might break the spell
Which must bend the Invincible,
The stern of thought ;
He yet defies the deepest power of Hell.

Fury.

Tear the veil !

Another Fury.

It is torn.

Chorus.

The pale stars of the morn
Shine on a misery, dire to be borne.
Dost thou faint, mighty Titan ? We laugh thee to scorn.

Dost thou boast the clear knowledge thou waken'dst for
man ?

Then was kindled within him a thirst which outran
Those perishing waters ; a thirst of fierce fever,
Hope, love, doubt, desire, which consume him for ever.

One came forth of gentle worth
Smiling on the sanguine earth ;
His words outlived him, like swift poison

Withering up truth, peace, and pity.
Look ! where round the wide horizon

Many a million-peopled city
Vomits smoke in the bright air.

Mark that outcry of despair !

'Tis his mild and gentle ghost

Wailing for the faith he kindled :

Look again, the flames almost

To a glow-worm's lamp have dwindled :

The survivors round the embers

Gather in dread.

Joy, joy, joy !

Past ages crowd on thee, but each one remembers,
And the future is dark, and the present is spread
Like a pillow of thorns for thy slumberless head.

Semichorus I.

Drops of bloody agony flow
From his white and quivering brow.

Grant a little respite now :

See a disenchanted nation

Springs like day from desolation ;

To Truth its state is dedicate,

And Freedom leads it forth, her mate ;

A legioned band of linkèd brothers

Whom Love calls children—

Semichorus II.

'Tis another's :
See how kindred murder kin :

'Tis the vintage-time for death and sin :
 Blood, like new wine, bubbles within :
 Till Despair smothers
 The struggling world, which slaves and tyrants win.
[All the FURIES vanish, except one.]

Ione. Hark, sister ! what a low yet dreadful groan
 Quite unsuppressed is tearing up the heart
 Of the good Titan, as storms tear the deep,
 And beasts hear the sea moan in inland caves.
 Darest thou observe how the fiends torture him ?

Panthea. Alas ! I looked forth twice, but will no more.

Ione. What didst thou see ?

Panthea. A woful sight : a youth
 With patient looks nailed to a crucifix.

Ione. What next ?

Panthea. The heaven around, the earth below
 Was peopled with thick shapes of human death,
 All horrible, and wrought by human hands,
 And some appeared the work of human hearts,
 For men were slowly killed by frowns and smiles :
 And other sights too foul to speak and live
 Were wandering by. Let us not tempt worse fear
 By looking forth : those groans are grief enough.

Fury. Behold an emblem : those who do endure
 Deep wrongs for man, and scorn, and chains, but heap
 Thousandfold torment on themselves and him.

Prometheus. Remit the anguish of that lighted stare ;
 Close those wan lips ; let that thorn-wounded brow
 Stream not with blood ; it mingles with thy tears !
 Fix, fix those tortured orbs in peace and death,
 So thy sick throes shake not that crucifix,
 So those pale fingers play not with thy gore.
 O, horrible ! Thy name I will not speak,
 It hath become a curse. I see, I see
 The wise, the mild, the lofty, and the just,
 Whom thy slaves hate for being like to thee,

Some hunted by foul lies from their heart's home,
 An early-chosen, late-lamented home ;
 As hooded ounces cling to the driven hind ;
 Some linked to corpses in unwholesome cells :
 Some—Hear I not the multitude laugh loud?—
 Impaled in lingering fire : and mighty realms
 Float by my feet, like sea-uprooted isles,
 Whose sons are kneaded down in common blood
 By the red light of their own burning homes.

Fury. Blood thou canst see, and fire ; and canst hear
 groans ;

Worse things, unheard, unseen, remain behind.

Prometheus. Worse ?

Fury. In each human heart terror survives
 The ruin it has gorged : the loftiest fear
 All that they would disdain to think were true :
 Hypocrisy and custom make their minds
 The fanes of many a worship, now outworn.
 They dare not devise good for man's estate,
 And yet they know not that they do not dare.
 The good want power, but to weep barren tears.
 The powerful goodness want : worse need for them.
 The wise want love ; and those who love want wisdom ;
 And all best things are thus confused to ill.
 Many are strong and rich, and would be just,
 But live among their suffering fellow-men
 As if none felt : they know not what they do.

Prometheus. Thy words are like a cloud of wingèd
 snakes ;

And yet I pity those they torture not.

Fury. Thou pitiest them ? I speak no more !

[*Vanishes.*

Prometheus.

Ah woe !

Ah woe ! Alas ! pain, pain ever, for ever !
 I close my tearless eyes, but see more clear
 Thy works within my woe-illuminèd mind,
 Thou subtle tyrant ! Peace is in the grave.

The grave hides all things beautiful and good :
 I am a God and cannot find it there,
 Nor would I seek it : for, though dread revenge,
 This is defeat, fierce king, not victory.
 The sights with which thou torturest gird my soul
 With new endurance, till the hour arrives
 When they shall be no types of things which are.

Panthea. Alas ! what sawest thou ?

Prometheus. There are two woes ;
 To speak, and to behold ; thou spare me one.
 Names are there, Nature's sacred watch-words, they
 Were borne aloft in bright emblazonry ;
 The nations thronged around, and cried aloud,
 As with one voice, Truth, liberty, and love !
 Suddenly fierce confusion fell from heaven
 Among them : there was strife, deceit, and fear :
 Tyrants rushed in, and did divide the spoil.
 This was the shadow of the truth I saw.

The Earth. I felt thy torture, son, with such mixed
 joy
 As pain and virtue give. To cheer thy state
 I bid ascend those subtle and fair spirits,
 Whose homes are the dim caves of human thought,
 And who inhabit, as birds wing the wind,
 Its world-surrounding aether : they behold
 Beyond that twilight realm, as in a glass,
 The future : may they speak comfort to thee !

Panthea. Look, sister, where a troop of spirits gather,
 Like flocks of clouds in spring's delightful weather,
 Thronging in the blue air !

Ione. And see ! more come,
 Like fountain-vapours when the winds are dumb,
 That climb up the ravine in scattered lines.
 And, hark ! is it the music of the pines ?
 Is it the lake ? Is it the waterfall ?

Panthea. 'Tis something sadder, sweeter far than
 all.

Chorus of Spirits.

From unremembered ages we
Gentle guides and guardians be
Of heaven-oppressed mortality ;
And we breathe, and sicken not,
The atmosphere of human thought :
Be it dim, and dank, and grey,
Like a storm-extinguished day,
Travelled o'er by dying gleams ;
Be it bright as all between
Cloudless skies and windless streams,
Silent, liquid, and serene ;
As the birds within the wind,
As the fish within the wave,
As the thoughts of man's own mind
Float through all above the grave ;
We make there our liquid lair,
Voyaging cloudlike and unpent
Through the boundless element :
Thence we bear the prophecy
Which begins and ends in thee !

Ione. More yet come, one by one ; the air around them
Looks radiant as the air around a star.

First Spirit.

On a battle-trumpet's blast
I fled hither, fast, fast, fast,
'Mid the darkness upward cast.
From the dust of creeds outworn,
From the tyrant's banner torn,
Gathering 'round me, onward borne,
There was mingled many a cry—
Freedom ! Hope ! Death ! Victory !
Till they faded through the sky ;
And one sound, above, around,

One sound beneath, around, above,
Was moving ; 'twas the soul of love :
'Twas the hope, the prophecy,
Which begins and ends in thee.

Second Spirit.

A rainbow's arch stood on the sea,
Which rocked beneath, immovably ;
And the triumphant storm did flee,
Like a conqueror, swift and proud,
Between, with many a captive cloud,
A shapeless, dark and rapid crowd,
Each by lightning riven in half :
I heard the thunder hoarsely laugh :
Mighty fleets were strewn like chaff
And spread beneath a hell of death
O'er the white waters. I alit
On a great ship lightning-split,
And speeded hither on the sigh
Of one who gave an enemy
His plank, then plunged aside to die.

Third Spirit.

I sate beside a sage's bed,
And the lamp was burning red
Near the book where he had fed,
When a Dream with plumes of flame,
To his pillow hovering came,
And I knew it was the same
Which had kindled long ago
Pity, eloquence, and woe ;
And the world awhile below
Wore the shade, its lustre made.
It has borne me here as fleet
As Desire's lightning feet :
I must ride it back ere morrow,
Or the sage will wake in sorrow.

Fourth Spirit.

On a poet's lips I slept
 Dreaming like a love-adept
 In the sound his breathing kept ;
 Nor seeks nor finds he mortal blisses,
 But feeds on the ærial kisses
 Of shapes that haunt thought's wildernesses.
 He will watch from dawn to gloom
 The lake-reflected sun illumine
 The yellow bees in the ivy-bloom,
 Nor heed nor see, what things they be ;
 But from these create he can
 Forms more real than living man,
 Nurslings of immortality !
 One of these awakened me,
 And I sped to succour thee.

Ione. Behold'st thou not two shapes from the east and west

Come, as two doves to one belovèd nest,
 Twin nurslings of the all-sustaining air
 On swift still winds glide down the atmosphere ?
 And, hark ! their sweet, sad voices ! 'tis despair
 Mingled with love and then dissolved in sound.

Panthea. Canst thou speak, sister ? all my words are drowned.

Ione. Their beauty gives me voice. See how they float
 On their sustaining wings of skiey grain,
 Orange and azure deepening into gold :
 Their soft smiles light the air like a star's fire.

Chorus of Spirits.

Hast thou beheld the form of Love ?

Fifth Spirit.

As over wide dominions
 I sped, like some swift cloud that wings the wide air's
 wildernesses,

That planet-crested shape swept by on lightning-braided
 pinions,
 Scattering the liquid joy of life from his ambrosial
 tresses :
 His footsteps paved the world with light ; but as I passed
 'twas fading,
 And hollow Ruin yawned behind : great sages bound in
 madness,
 And headless patriots, and pale youths who perished,
 unupbraiding,
 Gleamed in the night. I wandered o'er, till thou, O King
 of sadness,
 Turned by thy smile the worst I saw to recollected glad-
 ness.

Sixth Spirit.

Ah, sister ! Desolation is a delicate thing :
 It walks not on the earth, it floats not on the air,
 But treads with killing footstep, and fans with silent wing
 The tender hopes which in their hearts the best and
 gentlest bear ;
 Who, soothed to false repose by the fanning plumes above
 And the music-stirring motion of its soft and busy feet,
 Dream visions of ærial joy, and call the monster, Love,
 And wake, and find the shadow Pain, as he whom now
 we greet.

Chorus.

Though Ruin now Love's shadow be,
 Following him, destroyingly,
 On Death's white and wingèd steed,
 Which the fleetest cannot flee,
 Trampling down both flower and weed,
 Man and beast, and foul and fair,
 Like a tempest through the air ;
 Thou shalt quell this horseman grim,
 Woundless though in heart or limb.

Prometheus. Spirits! how know ye this shall be?

Chorus.

In the atmosphere we breathe,
As buds grow red when the snow-storms flee,
From spring gathering up beneath,
Whose mild winds shake the elder brake,
And the wandering herdsmen know
That the white-thorn soon will blow:
Wisdom, Justice, Love, and Peace,
When they struggle to increase,
Are to us as soft winds be
To shepherd boys, the prophecy
Which begins and ends in thee.

Ione. Where are the Spirits fled?

Panthea. Only a sense

Remains of them, like the omnipotence
Of music, when the inspired voice and lute
Languish, ere yet the responses are mute,
Which through the deep and labyrinthine soul,
Like echoes through long caverns, wind and roll.

Prometheus. How fair these air-born shapes! and yet
I feel

Most vain all hope but love; and thou art far,
Asia! who, when my being overflowed,
Wert like a golden chalice to bright wine
Which else had sunk into the thirsty dust.
All things are still: alas! how heavily
This quiet morning weighs upon my heart;
Though I should dream I could even sleep with grief
If slumber were denied not. I would fain
Be what it is my destiny to be,
The saviour and the strength of suffering man,
Or sink into the original gulph of things:
There is no agony, and no solace left;
Earth can console, Heaven can torment no more.

Panthea. Hast thou forgotten one who watches thee
The cold dark night, and never sleeps but when
The shadow of thy spirit falls on her?

Prometheus. I said all hope was vain but love: thou
lovest.

Panthea. Deeply in truth; but the eastern star looks
white,

And Asia waits in that far Indian vale
The scene of her sad exile; rugged once
And desolate and frozen, like this ravine;
But now invested with fair flowers and herbs,
And haunted by sweet airs and sounds, which flow
Among the woods and waters, from the aether
Of her transforming presence, which would fade
If it were mingled not with thine. Farewell!

END OF THE FIRST ACT.





ASIA AND PANTHEA
LISTEN TO THE ECHOES



ASIA AND PANTHEA
LISTEN TO THE ECHOES



SCENE I. *Morning. A lovely Vale in the
Indian Caucasus. ASIA alone.*

Asia. From all the blasts of heaven thou hast descended :

Yes, like a spirit, like a thought, which makes
Unwonted tears throng to the horny eyes,
And beatings haunt the desolated heart,
Which should have learnt repose : thou hast descended
Cradled in tempests ; thou dost wake, O Spring !
O child of many winds ! As suddenly
Thou comest as the memory of a dream,
Which now is sad because it hath been sweet ;
Like genius, or like joy which riseth up
As from the earth, clothing with golden clouds
The desert of our life.
This is the season, this the day, the hour ;
At sunrise thou shouldst come, sweet sister mine,

Too long desired, too long delaying, come !
How like death-worms the wingless moments crawl !
The point of one white star is quivering still
Deep in the orange light of widening morn
Beyond the purple mountains : through a chasm
Of wind-divided mist the darker lake
Reflects it : now it wanes : it gleams again
As the waves fade, and as the burning threads
Of woven cloud unravel in pale air :
'Tis lost ! and through yon peaks of cloudlike snow
The roseate sun-light quivers : hear I not
The Æolian music of her sea-green plumes
Winnowing the crimson dawn ?

[PANTHEA enters.

I feel, I see

Those eyes which burn through smiles that fade in tears,
Like stars half quenched in mists of silver dew.
Belovèd and most beautiful, who wearest
The shadow of that soul by which I live,
How late thou art ! the spherèd sun had climbed
The sea ; my heart was sick with hope, before
The printless air felt thy belated plumes.

Panthea. Pardon, great Sister ! but my wings were
faint

With the delight of a remembered dream,
As are the noon-tide plumes of summer winds
Sate with sweet flowers. I was wont to sleep
Peacefully, and awake refreshed and calm
Before the sacred Titan's fall, and thy
Unhappy love, had made, through use and pity,
Both love and woe familiar to my heart
As they had grown to thine : erewhile I slept
Under the glaucous caverns of old Ocean
Within dim bowers of green and purple moss,
Our young Ione's soft and milky arms
Locked then, as now, behind my dark, moist hair,
While my shut eyes and cheek were pressed within

The folded depth of her life-breathing bosom :
But not as now, since I am made the wind
Which fails beneath the music that I bear
Of thy most worldless converse ; since dissolved
Into the sense with which love talks, my rest
Was troubled and yet sweet ; my waking hours
Too full of care and pain.

Asia. Lift up thine eyes,
And let me read thy dream.

Panthea. As I have said
With our sea-sister at his feet I slept.
The mountain mists, condensing at our voice
Under the moon, had spread their snowy flakes,
From the keen ice shielding our linkèd sleep.
Then two dreams came. One, I remember not.
But in the other his pale wound-worn limbs
Fell from Prometheus, and the azure night
Grew radiant with the glory of that form
Which lives unchanged within, and his voice fell
Like music which makes giddy the dim brain,
Faint with intoxication of keen joy :
“ Sister of her whose footsteps pave the world
“ With loveliness—more fair than aught but her,
“ Whose shadow thou art—lift thine eyes on me.”
I lifted them : the overpowering light
Of that immortal shape was shadowed o’er
By love ; which, from his soft and flowing limbs,
And passion-parted lips, and keen, faint eyes,
Steamed forth like vaporous fire ; an atmosphere
Which wrapped me in its all-dissolving power,
As the warm aether of the morning sun
Wraps ere it drinks some cloud of wandering dew.
I saw not, heard not, moved not, only felt
His presence flow and mingle through my blood
Till it became his life, and his grew mine,
And I was thus absorbed, until it passed,
And like the vapours when the sun sinks down,

Gathering again in drops upon the pines,
 And tremulous as they, in the deep night
 My being was condensed ; and as the rays
 Of thought were slowly gathered, I could hear
 His voice, whose accents lingered ere they died
 Like footsteps of weak melody : thy name
 Among the many sounds alone I heard
 Of what might be articulate ; though still
 I listened through the night when sound was none.
 Ione wakened then, and said to me :

“ Canst thou divine what troubles me to-night ?

“ I always knew what I desired before,

“ Nor ever found delight to wish in vain.

“ But now I cannot tell thee what I seek ;

“ I know not ; something sweet, since it is sweet

“ Even to desire ; it is thy sport, false sister ;

“ Thou hast discovered some enchantment old,

“ Whose spells have stolen my spirit as I slept

“ And mingled it with thine : for when just now

“ We kissed, I felt within thy parted lips

“ The sweet air that sustained me, and the warmth

“ Of the life-blood, for loss of which I faint,

“ Quivered between our intertwining arms.”

I answered not, for the Eastern star grew pale,

But fled to thee.

Asia. Thou speakest, but thy words
 Are as the air : I feel them not : Oh, lift
 Thine eyes, that I may read his written soul !

Panthea. I lift them though they droop beneath the
 load

Of that they would express : what canst thou see
 But thine own fairest shadow imaged there ?

Asia. Thine eyes are like the deep, blue, boundless
 heaven

Contracted to two circles underneath
 Their long, fine lashes ; dark, far, measureless,
 Orb within orb, and line through line inwoven.

Panthea. Why lookest thou as if a spirit passed?

Asia. There is a change : beyond their inmost depth
I see a shade, a shape : 'tis He, arrayed
In the soft light of his own smiles, which spread
Like radiance from the cloud-surrounded moon.
Prometheus, it is thine ! depart not yet !
Say not those smiles that we shall meet again
Within that bright pavilion which their beams
Shall build on the waste world ? The dream is told.
What shape is that between us ? Its rude hair
Roughens the wind that lifts it, its regard
Is wild and quick, yet 'tis a thing of air
For through its grey robe gleams the golden dew
Whose stars the noon has quenched not.

Dream.

Follow ! Follow !

Panthea. It is mine other dream.

Asia.

It disappears.

Panthea. It passes now into my mind. Methought
As we sate here, the flower-infolding buds
Burst on yon lightning-blasted almond-tree,
When swift from the white Scythian wilderness
A wind swept forth wrinkling the Earth with frost :
I looked, and all the blossoms were blown down ;
But on each leaf was stamped, as the blue bells
Of Hyacinth tell Apollo's written grief,
O, FOLLOW, FOLLOW !

Asia.

As you speak, your words
Fill, pause by pause, my own forgotten sleep
With shapes. Methought among the lawns together
We wandered, underneath the young grey dawn,
And multitudes of dense white fleecy clouds
Were wandering in thick flocks along the mountains
Shepherded by the slow, unwilling wind ;
And the white dew on the new bladed grass,
Just piercing the dark earth, hung silently :
And there was more which I remember not :
But on the shadows of the morning clouds,

Athwart the purple mountain slope, was written
 FOLLOW, O, FOLLOW ! as they vanished by,
 And on each herb, from which Heaven's dew had fallen,
 The like was stamped, as with a withering fire,
 A wind arose among the pines ; it shook
 The clinging music from their boughs, and then
 Low, sweet, faint sounds, like the farewell of ghosts,
 Were heard : OH, FOLLOW, FOLLOW, FOLLOW ME !
 And then I said : " Panthea, look on me."
 But in the depth of those belovèd eyes
 Still I saw, FOLLOW, FOLLOW !

Echo. Follow, follow !

Panthea. The crags, this clear spring morning, mock
 our voices

As they were spirit-tongued.

Asia. It is some being
 Around the crags. What fine clear sounds ! O, list !

Echoes (unseen).
 Echoes we : listen !
 We cannot stay :
 As dew-stars glisten
 Then fade away—
 Child of Ocean !

Asia. Hark ! Spirits speak. The liquid responses
 Of their aërial tongues yet sound.

Panthea. I hear.

Echoes.
 O, follow, follow,
 As our voice recedeth
 Through the caverns hollow,
 Where the forest spreadeth ;

(*More distant.*)
 O, follow, follow !
 Through the caverns hollow,

As the song floats thou pursue,
Where the wild bee never flew,
Through the noon-tide darkness deep,
By the odour-breathing sleep
Of faint night flowers, and the waves
At the fountain-lighted caves,
While our music, wild and sweet,
Mocks thy gently falling feet,
Child of Ocean!

Asia. Shall we pursue the sound? It grows more
faint
And distant.

Panthea. List! the strain floats nearer now.

Echoes.

In the world unknown
Sleeps a voice unspoken;
By thy step alone
Can its rest be broken;
Child of Ocean!

Asia. How the notes sink upon the ebbing wind!

Echoes.

O, follow, follow!
Through the caverns hollow,
As the song floats thou pursue,
By the woodland noon-tide dew;
By the forests, lakes, and fountains
Through the many-folded mountains;
To the rents, and gulphs, and chasms,
Where the Earth reposed from spasms,
On the day when He and thou
Parted, to commingle now;
Child of Ocean!

Asia. Come, sweet Panthea, link thy hand in mine,
And follow, ere the voices fade away.



SCENE II. *A Forest, intermingled with Rocks and Caverns. ASIA and PANTHEA pass into it. Two young Fauns are sitting on a Rock, listening.*

Semichorus I. of Spirits.

The path through which that lovely twain
Have passed, by cedar, pine, and yew,
And each dark tree that ever grew,
Is curtained out from Heaven's wide blue ;
Nor sun, nor moon, nor wind, nor rain,
Can pierce its interwoven bowers,
Nor aught, save where some cloud of dew,
Drifted along the earth-creeping breeze,
Between the trunks of the hoar trees,
Hangs each a pearl in the pale flowers
Of the green laurel, blown anew ;
And bends, and then fades silently,
One frail and fair anemone :
Or when some star of many a one

That climbs and wanders through steep night,
Has found the cleft through which alone
Beams fall from high those depths upon
Ere it is borne away, away,
By the swift Heavens that cannot stay,
It scatters drops of golden light,
Like lines of rain that ne'er unite :
And the gloom divine is all around.
And underneath is the mossy ground ;

Semichorus II.

There the voluptuous nightingales,
Are awake through all the broad noon-day.
When one with bliss or sadness fails,
And through the windless ivy-boughs,
Sick with sweet love, droops dying away
On its mate's music-panting bosom ;
Another from the swinging blossom,
Watching to catch the languid close
Of the last strain, then lifts on high
The wings of the weak melody,
'Till some new strain of feeling bear
The song, and all the woods are mute ;
When there is heard through the dim air
The rush of wings, and rising there
Like many a lake-surrounded flute,
Sounds overflow the listener's brain
So sweet, that joy is almost pain.

Semichorus I.

There those enchanted eddies play
Of echoes, music-tongued, which draw,
By Demogorgon's mighty law,
With melting rapture, or sweet awe,
All spirits on that secret way ;
As inland boats are driven to Ocean

Down streams made strong with mountain-thaw :
 And first there comes a gentle sound
 To those in talk or slumber bound,
 And wakes the destined. Soft emotion
 Attracts, impels them : those who saw
 Say from the breathing earth behind
 There steams a plume-uplifting wind
 Which drives them on their path, while they
 Believe their own swift wings and feet
 The sweet desires within obey :
 And so they float upon their way,
 Until, still sweet, but loud and strong,
 The storm of sound is driven along,
 Sucked up and hurrying : as they fleet
 Behind, its gathering billows meet
 And to the fatal mountain bear
 Like clouds amid the yielding air.

First Faun. Canst thou imagine where those spirits
 live

Which make such delicate music in the woods?
 We haunt within the least frequented caves
 And closest coverts, and we know these wilds,
 Yet never meet them, though we hear them oft :
 Where may they hide themselves?

Second Faun. 'Tis hard to tell :

I have heard those more skilled in spirits say,
 The bubbles, which the enchantment of the sun
 Sucks from the pale faint water-flowers that pave
 The oozy bottom of clear lakes and pools,
 Are the pavilions where such dwell and float
 Under the green and golden atmosphere
 Which noon-tide kindles through the woven leaves ;
 And when these burst, and the thin fiery air,
 The which they breathed within those lucent domes,
 Ascends to flow like meteors through the night,
 They ride on them, and rein their headlong speed,

And bow their burning crests, and glide in fire
Under the waters of the earth again.

First Faun. If such live thus, have others other lives,
Under pink blossoms or within the bells
Of meadow flowers, or folded violets deep,
Or on their dying odours, when they die,
Or in the sunlight of the spherèd dew?

Second Faun. Aye, many more which we may well
divine.

But, should we stay to speak, noontide would come,
And thwart Silenus find his goats undrawn,
And grudge to sing those wise and lovely songs
Of fate, and chance, and God, and Chaos old,
And Love, and the chained Titan's woful doom,
And how he shall be loosed, and make the earth
One brotherhood : delightful strains which cheer
Our solitary twilights, and which charm
To silence the unenvying nightingales.





SCENE III. *A Pinnacle of Rock among Mountains.*
ASIA and PANTHEA.

Panthea. Hither the sound has borne us—to the realm
Of Demogorgon, and the mighty portal,
Like a volcano's meteor-breathing chasm,
Whence the oracular vapour is hurled up
Which lonely men drink wandering in their youth,
And call truth, virtue, love, genius, or joy,
That maddening wine of life, whose dregs they drain
To deep intoxication ; and uplift,
Like Maenads who cry aloud, Evoe ! Evoe !
The voice which is contagion to the world.

Asia. Fit throne for such a Power ! Magnificent !
How glorious art thou, Earth ! And if thou be
The shadow of some spirit lovelier still,
Though evil stain its work, and it should be
Like its creation, weak yet beautiful,
I could fall down and worship that and thee.
Even now my heart adoreth : Wonderful !
Look, sister, ere the vapour dim thy brain :
Beneath is a wide plain of billowy mist,

As a lake, paving in the morning sky,
With azure waves which burst in silver light,
Some Indian vale. Behold it, rolling on
Under the curdling winds, and islanding
The peak whereon we stand, midway, around,
Encinctured by the dark and blooming forests,
Dim twilight-lawns, and stream-illumined caves,
And wind-enchanted shapes of wandering mist ;
And far on high the keen sky-cleaving mountains
From icy spires of sun-like radiance fling
The dawn, as lifted Ocean's dazzling spray,
From some Atlantic islet scattered up,
Spangles the wind with lamp-like water-drops.
The vale is girdled with their walls, a howl
Of cataracts from their thaw-cloven ravines,
Satiates the listening wind, continuous, vast,
Awful as silence. Hark ! the rushing snow !
The sun-awakened avalanche ! whose mass,
Thrice sifted by the storm, had gathered there
Flake after flake, in heaven-defying minds
As thought by thought is piled, till some great truth
Is loosened, and the nations echo round,
Shaken to their roots, as do the mountains now.

Panthea. Look how the gusty sea of mist is break-
ing

In crimson foam, even at our feet ! it rises
As Ocean at the enchantment of the moon
Round foodless men wrecked on some oozy isle.

Asia. The fragments of the cloud are scattered
up ;

The wind that lifts them disentwines my hair ;
Its billows now sweep o'er mine eyes ; my brain
Grows dizzy ; I see thin shapes within the mist.

Panthea. A countenance with beckoning smiles : there
burns

An azure fire within its golden locks !
Another and another : hark ! they speak !

Song of Spirits.

To the deep, to the deep,
Down, down !
Through the shade of sleep,
Through the cloudy strife
Of Death and of Life ;
Through the veil and the bar
Of things which seem and are
Even to the steps of the remotest throne,
Down, down !

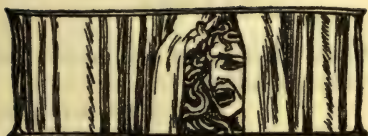
While the sound whirls around,
Down, down !
As the fawn draws the hound,
As the lightning the vapour,
As a weak moth the taper ;
Death, despair ; love, sorrow ;
Time both ; to-day, to-morrow ;
As steel obeys the spirit of the stone,
Down, down !

Through the grey, void abysm,
Down, down !
Where the air is no prism,
And the moon and stars are not,
And the cavern-crag wears not
The radiance of Heaven,
Nor the gloom to Earth given,
Where there is one pervading, one alone,
Down, down !

In the depth of the deep
Down, down !
Like veiled lightning asleep,
Like the spark nursed in embers,
The last look Love remembers,
Like a diamond, which shines
On the dark wealth of mines,

A spell is treasured but for thee alone.
Down, down !

We have bound thee, we guide thee ;
Down, down !
With the bright form beside thee ;
Resist not the weakness,
Such strength is in meekness
That the Eternal, the Immortal,
Must unloose through life's portal
The snake-like Doom coiled underneath his
throne
By that alone.





SCENE IV. *The Cave of DEMOGORGON. ASIA and PANTHEA.*

Panthea. What veiled form sits on that ebon throne?

Asia. The veil has fallen.

Panthea. I see a mighty darkness
Filling the seat of power, and rays of gloom
Dart round, as light from the meridian sun,
Ungazed upon and shapeless ; neither limb,
Nor form, nor outline ; yet we feel it is
A living Spirit.

Demogorgon. Ask what thou wouldst know.

Asia. What canst thou tell?

Demogorgon. All things thou dar'st demand.

Asia. Who made the living world?

Demogorgon. God.

Asia. Who made all
That it contains? thought, passion, reason, will,
Imagination?

Demogorgon. God : Almighty God.

Asia. Who made that sense which, when the winds of
spring

In rarest visitation, or the voice
Of one belovèd heard in youth alone,
Fills the faint eyes with falling tears which dim
The radiant looks of unbewailing flowers,
And leaves this peopled earth a solitude
When it returns no more?

Demogorgon. Merciful God.

Asia. And who made terror, madness, crime, remorse,
Which from the links of the great chain of things,
To every thought within the mind of man
Sway and drag heavily, and each one reels
Under the load towards the pit of death ;
Abandoned hope, and love that turns to hate ;
And self-contempt, bitterer to drink than blood ;
Pain, whose unheeded and familiar speech
Is howling, and keen shrieks, day after day ;
And Hell, or the sharp fear of Hell?

Demogorgon. He reigns.

Asia. Utter his name : a world pining in pain
Asks but his name : curses shall drag him down.

Demogorgon. He reigns.

Asia. I feel, I know it : who?

Demogorgon. He reigns.

Asia. Who reigns? There was the Heaven and Earth
at first,

And Light and Love ; then Saturn, from whose throne
Time fell, an envious shadow : such the state
Of the earth's primal spirits beneath his sway,
As the calm joy of flowers and living leaves
Before the wind or sun has withered them,
And semivital worms ; but he refused
The birthright of their being, knowledge, power,
The skill which wields the elements, the thought
Which pierces this dim universe like light,
Self-empire, and the majesty of love ;

For thirst of which they fainted. Then Prometheus
Gave wisdom, which is strength, to Jupiter,
And with this law alone, "Let man be free,"
Clothed him with the dominion of wide Heaven.
To know nor faith, nor love, nor law ; to be
Omnipotent but friendless is to reign ;
And Jove now reigned ; for on the race of man
First famine, and then toil, and then disease,
Strife, wounds, and ghastly death unseen before,
Fell ; and the unseasonable seasons drove
With alternating shafts of frost and fire,
Their shelterless, pale tribes to mountain caves :
And in their desert hearts fierce wants he sent,
And mad disquietudes, and shadows idle
Of unreal good, which levied mutual war,
So ruining the lair wherein they raged.
Prometheus saw, and waked the legioned hopes
Which sleep within folded Elysian flowers,
Nepenthe, Moly, Amaranth, fadeless blooms,
That they might hide with thin and rainbow wings
The shape of Death ; and Love he sent to bind
The disunited tendrils of that vine
Which bears the wine of life, the human heart ;
And he tamed fire which, like some beast of prey,
Most terrible, but lovely, played beneath
The frown of man ; and tortured to his will
Iron and gold, the slaves and signs of power,
And gems and poisons, and all subtlest forms
Hidden beneath the mountains and the waves.
He gave man speech, and speech created thought,
Which is the measure of the universe ;
And Science struck the thrones of earth and heaven,
Which shook, but fell not ; and the harmonious mind
Poured itself forth in all-prophetic song ;
And music lifted up the listening spirit
Until it walked, exempt from mortal care,
Godlike, o'er the clear billows of sweet sound ;

And human hands first mimicked and then mocked,
With moulded limbs more lovely than its own,
The human form, till marble grew divine ;
And mothers, gazing, drank the love men see
Reflected in their race, behold, and perish.
He told the hidden power of herbs and springs,
And Disease drank and slept. Death grew like sleep.
He taught the implicated orbits woven
Of the wide-wandering stars ; and how the sun
Changes his lair, and by what secret spell
The pale moon is transformed, when her broad eye
Gazes not on the interlunar sea :
He taught to rule, as life directs the limbs,
The tempest-wingèd chariots of the Ocean,
And the Celt knew the Indian. Cities then
Were built, and through their snow-like columns flowed
The warm winds, and the azure aether shone,
And the blue sea and shadowy hills were seen.
Such, the alleviations of his state,
Prometheus gave to man, for which he hangs
Withering in destined pain : but who reigns down
Evil, the immedicable plague, which, while
Man looks on his creation like a God
And sees that it is glorious, drives him on
The wreck of his own will, the scorn of earth,
The outcast, the abandoned, the alone ?
Not Jove : while yet his frown shook heaven, aye, when
His adversary from adamantine chains
Cursed him, he trembled like a slave. Declare
Who is his master ? Is he too a slave ?

Demogorgon. All spirits are enslaved which serve
things evil :

Thou knowest if Jupiter be such or no.

Asia. Whom calledst thou God ?

Demogorgon. I spoke but as ye speak,

For Jove is the supreme of living things.

Asia. Who is the master of the slave ?

Demogorgon. If the abysm
 Could vomit forth its secrets. But a voice
 Is wanting, the deep truth is imageless ;
 For what would it avail to bid thee gaze
 On the revolving world? What to bid speak
 Fate, Time, Occasion, Chance and Change? To these
 All things are subject but eternal Love.

Asia. So much I asked before, and my heart gave
 The response thou hast given ; and of such truths
 Each to itself must be the oracle.
 One more demand ; and do thou answer me
 As mine own soul would answer, did it know
 That which I ask. Prometheus shall arise
 Henceforth the sun of this rejoicing world :
 When shall the destined hour arrive?

Demogorgon.

Behold !

Asia. The rocks are cloven, and through the purple
 night
 I see cars drawn by rainbow-wingèd steeds
 Which trample the dim winds : in each there stands
 A wild-eyed charioteer urging their flight.
 Some look behind, as fiends pursued them there,
 And yet I see no shapes but the keen stars :
 Others, with burning eyes, lean forth, and drink
 With eager lips the wind of their own speed,
 As if the thing they loved fled on before,
 And now, even now, they clasped it. Their bright locks
 Stream like a comet's flashing hair : they all
 Sweep onward.

Demogorgon. These are the immortal Hours,
 Of whom thou didst demand. One waits for thee.

Asia. A spirit with a dreadful countenance
 Checks its dark chariot by the craggy gulph.
 Unlike thy brethren, ghastly charioteer,
 Who art thou? Whither wouldst thou bear me?

Speak !

Spirit. I am the shadow of a destiny

More dread than is my aspect : ere yon planet
Has set, the darkness which ascends with me
Shall wrap in lasting night heaven's kingless throne.

Asia. What meanest thou ?

Panthea. That terrible shadow floats
Up from its throne, as may the lurid smoke
Of earthquake-ruined cities o'er the sea.
Lo ! it ascends the car ; the coursers fly
Terrified : watch its path among the stars
Blackening the night !

Asia. Thus I am answered : strange !

Panthea. See, near the verge, another chariot stays ;
An ivory shell inlaid with crimson fire,
Which comes and goes within its sculptured rim
Of delicate strange tracery ; the young spirit
That guides it has the dove-like eyes of hope ;
How its soft smiles attract the soul ! as light
Lures wingèd insects through the lampless air.

Spirit.

My coursers are fed with the lightning,
They drink of the whirlwind's stream,
And when the red morning is brightning
They bathe in the fresh sunbeam ;
They have strength for their swiftness I deem,
Then ascend with me, daughter of Ocean.

I desire : and their speed makes night kindle ;
I fear : they outstrip the Typhoon ;
Ere the cloud piled on Atlas can dwindle
We encircle the earth and the moon :
We shall rest from long labours at noon :
Then ascend with me, daughter of Ocean.



SCENE V. *The Car pauses within a Cloud on the Top of a snowy Mountain. ASIA, PANTHEA, and the SPIRIT OF THE HOUR.*

Spirit.

On the brink of the night and the morning
My coursers are wont to respire ;
But the Earth has just whispered a warning
That their flight must be swifter than fire :
They shall drink the hot speed of desire !

Asia. Thou breathest on their nostrils, but my breath
Would give them swifter speed.

Spirit. Alas ! it could not.

Panthea. Oh Spirit ! pause, and tell whence is the light
Which fills the cloud ? the sun is yet unrisen.

Spirit. The sun will rise not until noon. Apollo
Is held in heaven by wonder ; and the light
Which fills this vapour, as the ærial hue
Of fountain-gazing roses fills the water,
Flows from thy mighty sister.

Panthea. Yes, I feel—

Asia. What is it with thee, sister ? Thou art pale.

Panthea. How thou art changed ! I dare not look on
thee ;

I feel but see thee not. I scarce endure
The radiance of thy beauty. Some good change

Is working in the elements, which suffer
 Thy presence thus unveiled. The Nereids tell
 That on the day when the clear hyaline
 Was cloven at thy uprise, and thou didst stand
 Within a veined shell, which floated on
 Over the calm floor of the crystal sea,
 Among the Aegean isles, and by the shores
 Which bear thy name ; love, like the atmosphere
 Of the sun's fire filling the living world,
 Burst from thee, and illumined earth and heaven
 And the deep ocean and the sunless caves
 And all that dwells within them ; till grief cast
 Eclipse upon the soul from which it came :
 Such art thou now ; nor is it I alone,
 Thy sister, thy companion, thine own chosen one,
 But the whole world which seeks thy sympathy.
 Hear'st thou not sounds i' the air which speak the love
 Of all articulate beings ? Feel'st thou not
 The inanimate winds enamoured of thee ? List ! (*Music.*)

Asia. Thy words are sweeter than aught else but
 his

Whose echoes they are : yet all love is sweet,
 Given or returned. Common as light is love,
 And its familar voice wearies not ever.
 Like the wide heaven, the all-sustaining air,
 It makes the reptile equal to the God :
 They who inspire it most are fortunate,
 As I am now ; but those who feel it most
 Are happier still, after long sufferings,
 As I shall soon become.

Panthea. List ! Spirits speak.

VOICE *in the Air, singing.*

Life of Life ! thy lips enkindle

With their love the breath between them ;
 And thy smiles before they dwindle
 Make the cold air fire ; then screen them

In those looks, where whoso gazes
Faints, entangled in their mazes.

Child of Light ! thy limbs are burning
Through the vest which seems to hide them ;
As the radiant lines of morning
Through the clouds ere they divide them ;
And this atmosphere divinest
Shrouds thee wheresoe'er thou shinest.

Fair are others ; none beholds thee,
But thy voice sounds low and tender
Like the fairest, for it folds thee
From the sight, that liquid splendour,
And all feel, yet see thee never,
As I feel now, lost for ever !

Lamp of Earth ! where'er thou movest
Its dim shapes are clad with brightness,
And the souls of whom thou lovest
Walk upon the winds with lightness,
Till they fail, as I am failing,
Dizzy, lost, yet unbewailing !

Asia.

My soul is an enchanted boat,
Which, like a sleeping swan, doth float
Upon the silver waves of thy sweet singing ;
And thine doth like an angel sit
Beside a helm conducting it,
Whilst all the winds with melody are ringing.
It seems to float ever, for ever,
Upon that many-winding river,
Between mountains, woods, abysses,
A paradise of wildernesses !
Till, like one in slumber bound,
Borne to the ocean, I float down, around,
Into a sea profound, of ever-spreading sound :

Meanwhile thy spirit lifts its pinions
In music's most serene dominions ;
Catching the winds that fan that happy heaven.
And we sail on, away, afar,
Without a course, without a star,
But by the instinct of sweet music driven ;
Till through Elysian garden islets
By thee, most beautiful of pilots,
Where never mortal pinnacle glided,
The boat of thy desire is guided :
Realms where the air we breathe is love,
Which in the winds and on the waves doth move,
Harmonizing this earth with what we feel above.

We have passed Age's icy caves,
And manhood's dark and tossing waves,
And Youth's smooth ocean, smiling to betray :
Beyond the glassy gulphs we flee
Of shadow-peopled Infancy,
Through Death and Birth, to a diviner day ;
A paradise of vaulted bowers,
Lit by downward-gazing flowers,
And watery paths that wind between
Wildernesses calm and green,
Peopled by shapes too bright to see,
And rest, having beheld ; somewhat like thee ;
Which walk upon the sea, and chaunt melodiously !

END OF THE SECOND ACT.







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APOLLO TELLS OCEAN
OF THE FALL OF JOVE



SCENE I. *Heaven. JUPITER on his Throne ;
THETIS and the other Deities assembled.*

Jupiter. Ye congregated powers of heaven, who share
The glory and the strength of him ye serve,
Rejoice ! henceforth I am omnipotent.
All else had been subdued to me ; alone
The soul of man, like unextinguished fire,
Yet burns towards heaven with fierce reproach, and doubt,
And lamentation, and reluctant prayer,
Hurling up insurrection, which might make
Our antique empire insecure, though built
On eldest faith, and hell's coeval, fear ;
And though my curses through the pendulous air,
Like snow on herbless peaks, fall flake by flake,
And cling to it ; though under my wrath's might
It climb the crags of life, step after step,
Which wound it, as ice wounds unsandalled feet,
It yet remains supreme o'er misery,
Aspiring, unrepressed, yet soon to fall :
Even now have I begotten a strange wonder,

That fatal child, the terror of the earth,
 Who waits but till the destined hour arrive,
 Bearing from Demogorgon's vacant throne
 The dreadful might of ever-living limbs
 Which clothed that awful spirit unbeheld,
 To redescend, and trample out the spark.

Pour forth heaven's wine, Idæan Ganymede,
 And let it fill the Dædal cups like fire,
 And from the flower-inwoven soil divine
 Ye all-triumphant harmonies arise,
 As dew from earth under the twilight stars :
 Drink ! be the nectar circling through your veins
 The soul of joy, ye ever-living Gods,
 Till exultation burst in one wide voice
 Like music from Elysian winds.

And thou

Ascend beside me, veiled in the light
 Of the desire which makes thee one with me,
 Thetis, bright image of eternity !
 When thou didst cry, " Insufferable might !
 " God ! Spare me ! I sustain not the quick flames,
 " The penetrating presence ; all my being,
 " Like him whom the Numidian seps did thaw
 " Into a dew with poison, is dissolved,
 " Sinking through its foundations : " even then
 Two mighty spirits, mingling, made a third
 Mightier than either, which, unbodied now,
 Between us floats, felt, although unbeheld,
 Waiting the incarnation, which ascends,
 (Hear ye the thunder of the fiery wheels
 Griding the winds ?) from Demogorgon's throne.
 Victory ! victory ! Feel'st thou not, O world,
 The earthquake of his chariot thundering up
 Olympus ?

[*The Car of the HOUR arrives. DEMOGORGON
 descends, and moves towards the Throne of JUPITER.*

Awful shape, what art thou? Speak!

Demogorgon. Eternity. Demand no direr name.
Descend, and follow me down the abyss.
I am thy child, as thou wert Saturn's child;
Mightier than thee: and we must dwell together
Henceforth in darkness. Lift thy lightnings not.
The tyranny of heaven none may retain,
Or reassume, or hold, succeeding thee:
Yet if thou wilt, as 'tis the destiny
Of trodden worms to writhe till they are dead,
Put forth thy might.

Jupiter. Detested prodigy!
Even thus beneath the deep Titanian prisons
I trample thee! thou lingerest?

Mercy! mercy!
No pity, no release, no respite! Oh,
That thou wouldst make mine enemy my judge,
Even where he hangs, seared by my long revenge,
On Caucasus! he would not doom me thus.
Gentle, and just, and dreadless, is he not
The monarch of the world? What then art thou?
No refuge! no appeal!

Sink with me then,
We two will sink on the wide waves of ruin,
Even as a vulture and a snake outspent
Drop, twisted in inextricable fight,
Into a shoreless sea. Let hell unlock
Its mounded oceans of tempestuous fire,
And whelm on them into the bottomless void
This desolated world, and thee, and me,
The conqueror and the conquered, and the wreck
Of that for which they combated.

Ai! Ai!

The elements obey me not. I sink
Dizzily down, ever, for ever, down.
And, like a cloud, mine enemy above
Darkens my fall with victory! Ai, Ai!



SCENE II. *The Mouth of a great River in the Island Atlantis. OCEAN is discovered reclining near the Shore; APOLLO stands beside him.*

Ocean. He fell, thou sayest, beneath his conqueror's frown?

Apollo. Aye, when the strife was ended which made dim

The orb I rule, and shook the solid stars,
The terrors of his eye illumined heaven
With sanguine light, through the thick ragged skirts
Of the victorious darkness, as he fell :
Like the last glare of day's red agony,
Which from a rent among the fiery clouds,
Burns far along the tempest-wrinkled deep.

Ocean. He sunk to the abyss? To the dark void?

Apollo. An eagle so caught in some bursting cloud
On Caucasus, his thunder-baffled wings
Entangled in the whirlwind, and his eyes
Which gazed on the undazzling sun, now blinded
By the white lightning, while the ponderous hail
Beats on his struggling form, which sinks at length
Prone, and the aërial ice clings over it.

Ocean. Henceforth the fields of Heaven-reflecting sea
Which are my realm will heave, unstained with blood,

Beneath the uplifting winds, like plains of corn
 Swayed by the summer air ; my streams will flow
 Round many-peopled continents, and round
 Fortunate isles ; and from their glassy thrones
 Blue Proteus and his humid nymphs shall mark
 The shadow of fair ships, as mortals see
 The floating bark of the light-laden moon
 With that white star, its sightless pilot's crest,
 Borne down the rapid sunset's ebbing sea ;
 Tracking their path no more by blood and groans,
 And desolation, and the mingled voice
 Of slavery and command ; but by the light
 Of wave-reflected flowers, and floating odours,
 And music soft, and mild, free, gentle voices,
 And sweetest music, such as spirits love.

Apollo. And I shall gaze not on the deeds which make
 My mind obscure with sorrow, as eclipse
 Darkens the sphere I guide ; but list, I hear
 The small, clear, silver lute of the young Spirit
 That sits i' the morning star.

Ocean. Thou must away ;
 Thy steeds will pause at even, till when farewell :
 The loud deep calls me home even now to feed it
 With azure calm out of the emerald urns
 Which stand for ever full beside my throne.
 Behold the Nereids under the green sea,
 Their wavering limbs borne on the wind-like stream,
 Their white arms lifted o'er their streaming hair
 With garlands pied and starry sea-flower crowns,
 Hastening to grace their mighty sister's joy.

[*A sound of waves is heard.*]

It is the unpastured sea hungering for calm.

Peace, monster ; I come now. Farewell.

Apollo. Farewell. Farewell.



SCENE III. *Caucasus.* PROMETHEUS, HERCULES,
 IONE, *the EARTH*, SPIRITS, ASIA, and PANTHEA, borne
in the Car with the SPIRIT OF THE HOUR.

HERCULES *unbinds* PROMETHEUS, *who descends.*

Hercules. Most glorious among spirits, thus doth
 strength
 To wisdom, courage, and long-suffering love,
 And thee, who art the form they animate,
 Minister like a slave.

Prometheus. Thy gentle words
 Are sweeter even than freedom long desired
 And long delayed.

Asia, thou light of life,
 Shadow of beauty unbeheld : and ye,
 Fair sister nymphs, who made long years of pain
 Sweet to remember, through your love and care :
 Henceforth we will not part. There is a cave,
 All overgrown with trailing odorous plants,
 Which curtain out the day with leaves and flowers,
 And paved with veined emerald, and a fountain
 Leaps in the midst with an awakening sound.
 From its curved roof the mountain's frozen tears

Like snow, or silver, or long diamond spires,
Hang downward, raining forth a doubtful light :
And there is heard the ever-moving air,
Whispering without from tree to tree, and birds,
And bees ; and all around are mossy seats,
And the rough walls are clothed with long soft grass ;
A simple dwelling, which shall be our own ;
Where we will sit and talk of time and change,
As the world ebbs and flows, ourselves unchanged.
What can hide man from mutability ?
And if ye sigh, then I will smile ; and thou,
Ione, shalt chaunt fragments of sea-music,
Until I weep, when ye shall smile away
The tears she brought, which yet were sweet to shed.
We will entangle buds and flowers and beams
Which twinkle on the fountain's brim, and make
Strange combinations out of common things,
Like human babes in their brief innocence ;
And we will search, with looks and words of love,
For hidden thoughts, each lovelier than the last,
Our unexhausted spirits ; and like lutes
Touched by the skill of the enamoured wind,
Weave harmonies divine, yet ever new,
From difference sweet where discord cannot be ;
And hither come, sped on the charmèd winds,
Which meet from all the points of heaven, as bees
From every flower aërial Enna feeds,
At their known island-homes in Himera,
The echoes of the human world, which tell
Of the low voice of love, almost unheard,
And dove-eyed pity's murmured pain, and music,
Itself the echo of the heart, and all
That tempers or improves man's life, now free ;
And lovely apparitions, dim at first,
Then radiant, as the mind, arising bright
From the embrace of beauty, whence the forms
Of which these are the phantoms, casts on them

The gathered rays which are reality,
 Shall visit us, the progeny immortal
 Of Painting, Sculpture, and rapt Poesy,
 And arts, though unimagined, yet to be.
 The wandering voices and the shadows these
 Of all that man becomes, the mediators
 Of that best worship love, by him and us
 Given and returned ; swift shapes and sounds, which grow
 More fair and soft as man grows wise and kind,
 And veil by veil, evil and error fall :
 Such virtue has the cave and place around.

(*Turning to the* SPIRIT OF THE HOUR.)

For thee, fair Spirit, one toil remains. Ione,
 Give her that curvèd shell, which Proteus old
 Made Asia's nuptial boon, breathing within it
 A voice to be accomplished, and which thou
 Didst hide in grass under the hollow rock.

Ione. Thou most desired Hour, more loved and lovely
 Than all thy sisters, this is the mystic shell ;
 See the pale azure fading into silver
 Lining it with a soft yet glowing light :
 Looks it not like lulled music sleeping there ?

Spirit. It seems in truth the fairest shell of Ocean :
 Its sound must be at once both sweet and strange.

Prometheus. Go, borne over the cities of mankind
 On whirlwind-footed coursers : once again
 Outspeed the sun around the orbèd world ;
 And as thy chariot cleaves the kindling air,
 Thou breathe into the many-folded shell,
 Loosening its mighty music ; it shall be
 As thunder mingled with clear echoes : then
 Return ; and thou shalt dwell beside our cave.
 And thou, O, Mother Earth !—

The Earth. I hear, I feel ;
 Thy lips are on me, and thy touch runs down
 Even to the adamantine central gloom
 Along these marble nerves ; 'tis life, 'tis joy,

And through my withered, old, and icy frame
The warmth of an immortal youth shoots down
Circling. Henceforth the many children fair
Folded in my sustaining arms ; all plants,
And creeping forms, and insects rainbow-winged,
And birds, and beasts, and fish, and human shapes,
Which drew disease and pain from my wan bosom,
Draining the poison of despair, shall take
And interchange sweet nutriment ; to me
Shall they become like sister-antelopes
By one fair dam, snow-white and swift as wind,
Nursed among lilies near a brimming stream.
The dew-mists of my sunless sleep shall float
Under the stars like balm : night-folded flowers
Shall suck unwithering hues in their repose :
And men and beasts in happy dreams shall gather
Strength for the coming day, and all its joy :
And death shall be the last embrace of her
Who takes the life she gave, even as a mother
Folding her child, says, " Leave me not again."
Asia. Oh, mother ! wherefore speak the name of death?
Cease they to love, and move, and breathe, and speak,
Who die ?

The Earth. It would avail not to reply :
Thou art immortal, and this tongue is known
But to the uncommunicating dead.
Death is the veil which those who live call life :
They sleep, and it is lifted : and meanwhile
In mild variety the seasons mild
With rainbow-skirted showers, and odorous winds,
And long blue meteors cleansing the dull night,
And the life-kindling shafts of the keen sun's
All-piercing bow, and the dew-mingled rain
Of the calm moonbeams, a soft influence mild,
Shall clothe the forests and the fields, aye, even
The crag-built deserts of the barren deep,
With ever-living leaves, and fruits, and flowers.

And thou ! There is a cavern where my spirit
Was panted forth in anguish whilst thy pain
Made my heart mad, and those who did inhale it
Became mad too, and built a temple there,
And spoke, and were oracular, and lured
The erring nations round to mutual war,
And faithless faith, such as Jove kept with thee ;
Which breath now rises, as amongst tall weeds
A violet's exhalation, and it fills
With a serener light and crimson air
Intense, yet soft, the rocks and woods around ;
It feeds the quick growth of the serpent vine,
And the dark linked ivy tangling wild,
And budding, blown, or odour-faded blooms
Which star the winds with points of coloured light,
As they rain through them, and bright golden globes
Of fruit, suspended in their own green heaven,
And through their veined leaves and ember stems
The flowers whose purple and translucent bowls
Stand ever mantling with aërial dew,
The drink of spirits : and it circles round,
Like the soft waving wings of noonday dreams,
Inspiring calm and happy thoughts, like mine,
Now thou art thus restored. This cave is thine.
Arise ! Appear !

(A Spirit rises in the likeness of a winged child.)

This is my torch-bearer ;
Who let his lamp out in old time with gazing
On eyes from which he kindled it anew
With love, which is as fire, sweet daughter mine,
For such is that within thine own. Run, wayward,
And guide this company beyond the peak
Of Bacchic Nysa, Maenad-haunted mountain,
And beyond Indus and its tribute rivers,
Trampling the torrent streams and grassy lakes
With feet unwet, unwearied, undelaying,
And up the green ravine, across the vale,

Beside the windless and crystalline pool,
Where ever lies, on unerasing waves,
The image of a temple, built above,
Distinct with column, arch, and architrave,
And palm-like capital, and over-wrought,
And populous most with living imagery,
Praxitelean shapes, whose marble smiles
Fill the hushed air with everlasting love.
It is deserted now, but once it bore
Thy name, Prometheus ; there the emulous youths
Bore to thy honour through the divine gloom
The lamp which was thine emblem ; even as those
Who bear the untransmitted torch of hope
Into the grave, across the night of life,
As thou hast borne it most triumphantly
To this far goal of Time. Depart, farewell.
Beside that temple is the destined cave.





SCENE IV. *A Forest. In the Background a Cave.*
PROMETHEUS, ASIA, PANTHEA, IONE, and the SPIRIT
OF THE EARTH.

Ione. Sister, it is not earthly : how it glides
Under the leaves ! how on its head there burns
A light, like a green star, whose emerald beams
Are twined with its fair hair ! how, as it moves,
The splendour drops in flakes upon the grass !
Knowest thou it ?

Panthea. It is the delicate spirit
That guides the earth through heaven. From afar
The populous constellations call that light
The loveliest of the planets ; and sometimes
It floats along the spray of the salt sea,
Or makes its chariot of a foggy cloud,
Or walks through fields or cities while men sleep,
Or o'er the mountain tops, or down the rivers,
Or through the green waste wilderness, as now,
Wondering at all it sees. Before Jove reigned
It loved our sister Asia, and it came

Each leisure hour to drink the liquid light
 Out of her eyes, for which it said it thirsted
 As one bit by a dipsas, and with her
 It made its childish confidence, and told her
 All it had known or seen, for it saw much,
 Yet idly reasoned what it saw ; and called her,—
 For whence it sprung it knew not, nor do I,—
 “ Mother, dear mother.”

The Spirit of the Earth (running to Asia). Mother,
 dearest mother ;

May I then talk with thee as I was wont ?
 May I then hide my eyes in thy soft arms,
 After thy looks have made them tired of joy ?
 May I then play beside thee the long noons,
 When work is none in the bright silent air ?

Asia. I love thee, gentlest being, and henceforth
 Can cherish thee unenvied : speak, I pray :
 Thy simple talk once solaced, now delights.

Spirit of the Earth. Mother, I am grown wiser, though
 a child

Cannot be wise like thee, within this day ;
 And happier too ; happier and wiser both.
 Thou knowest that toads, and snakes, and loathly worms,
 And venomous and malicious beasts, and boughs
 That bore ill berries in the woods, were ever
 An hindrance to my walks o’er the green world :
 And that, among the haunts of humankind,
 Hard-featured men, or with proud, angry looks,
 Or cold, staid gait, or false and hollow smiles,
 Or the dull sneer of self-loved ignorance,
 Or other such foul masks, with which ill thoughts
 Hide that fair being whom we spirits call man ;
 And women too, ugliest of all things evil,
 (Though fair, even in a world where thou art fair,
 When good and kind, free and sincere like thee,)
 When false or frowning made me sick at heart
 To pass them, though they slept, and I unseen.

Well, my path lately lay through a great city
Into the woody hills surrounding it :
A sentinel was sleeping at the gate :
When there was heard a sound, so loud, it shook
The towers amid the moonlight, yet more sweet
Than any voice but thine, sweetest of all ;
A long, long sound, as it would never end :
And all the inhabitants leapt suddenly
Out of their rest, and gathered in the streets,
Looking in wonder up to Heaven, while yet
The music pealed along. I hid myself
Within a fountain in the public square,
Where I lay like the reflex of the moon
Seen in a wave under green leaves ; and soon
Those ugly human shapes and visages
Of which I spoke as having wrought me pain,
Passed floating through the air, and fading still
Into the winds that scattered them ; and those
From whom they passed seemed mild and lovely forms
After some foul disguise had fallen, and all
Were somewhat changed, and after brief surprise
And greetings of delightful wonder, all
Went to their sleep again : and when the dawn
Came, wouldst thou think that toads, and snakes, and
 efts,
Could e'er be beautiful ? yet so they were,
And that with little change of shape or hue :
All things had put their evil nature off :
I cannot tell my joy, when o'er a lake
Upon a drooping bough with night-shade twined,
I saw two azure halcyons clinging downward
And thinning one bright bunch of amber berries,
With quick long beaks, and in the deep there lay
Those lovely forms imaged as in a sky ;
So with my thoughts full of these happy changes,
We meet again, the happiest change of all.
 Asia. And never will we part, till thy chaste sister

Who guides the frozen and inconstant moon
Will look on thy more warm and equal light
Till her heart thaw like flakes of April snow
And love thee.

Spirit of the Earth. What ; as Asia loves Prometheus ?

Asia. Peace, wanton, thou art yet not old enough.

Think ye by gazing on each other's eyes
To multiply your lovely selves, and fill
With spherèd fires the interlunar air ?

Spirit of the Earth. Nay, mother, while my sister
trims her lamp

'Tis hard I should go darkling.

Asia.

Listen ; look !

The SPIRIT OF THE HOUR enters.

Prometheus. We feel what thou hast heard and seen :
yet speak.

Spirit of the Hour. Soon as the sound had ceased
whose thunder filled

The abysses of the sky and the wide earth,
There was a change : the impalpable thin air
And the all-circling sunlight were transformed,
As if the sense of love dissolved in them
Had folded itself round the spherèd world.
My vision then grew clear, and I could see
Into the mysteries of the universe :
Dizzy as with delight I floated down,
Winnowing the lightsome air with languid plumes,
My coursers sought their birth-place in the sun,
Where they henceforth will live exempt from toil
Pasturing flowers of vegetable fire.
And where my moonlike car will stand within
A temple, gazed upon by Phidian forms
Of thee, and Asia, and the Earth, and me,
And you fair nymphs looking the love we feel ;
In memory of the tidings it has borne ;

Beneath a dome fretted with graven flowers,
Poised on twelve columns of resplendent stone,
And open to the bright and liquid sky.
Yoked to it by an amphisbenic snake
The likeness of those wingèd steeds will mock
The flight from which they find repose. Alas,
Whither has wandered now my partial tongue
When all remains untold which ye would hear?
As I have said I floated to the earth :
It was, as it is still, the pain of bliss
To move, to breathe, to be ; I wandering went
Among the haunts and dwellings of mankind,
And first was disappointed not to see
Such mighty change as I had felt within
Expressed in outward things ; but soon I looked,
And behold, thrones were kingless, and men walked
One with the other even as spirits do,
None fawned, none trampled ; hate, disdain, or fear,
Self-love or self-content, on human brows,
No more inscribed, as o'er the gate of hell,
" All hope abandon ye who enter here ;"
None frowned, none trembled, none with eager fear
Gazed on another's eye of cold command,
Until the subject of the tyrant's will
Became, worse fate, the abject of his own,
Which spurred him, like an outspent horse, to death.
None wrought his lips in truth-entangling lines
Which smiled the lie his tongue disdained to speak ;
None, with firm sneer, trod out in his own heart
The sparks of love and hope till there remained
Those bitter ashes, a soul self-consumed,
And the wretch crept a vampire among men,
Infecting all with his own hideous ill ;
None talked that common, false, cold, hollow talk
Which makes the heart deny the *yes* it breathes,
Yet question that unmeant hypocrisy
With such a self-mistrust as has no name.

And women, too, frank, beautiful, and kind
As the free heaven which rains fresh light and dew
On the wide earth, passed ; gentle radiant forms,
From custom's evil taint exempt and pure ;
Speaking the wisdom once they could not think,
Looking emotions once they feared to feel,
And changed to all which once they dared not be,
Yet being now, made earth like heaven ; nor pride,
Nor jealousy, nor envy, nor ill shame,
The bitterest of those drops of treasured gall,
Spoilt the sweet taste of the nepenthe, love.

Thrones, altars, judgment-seats, and prisons ; wherein,
And beside which, by wretched men were borne
Sceptres, tiaras, swords, and chains, and tomes
Of reasoned wrong, glozed on by ignorance,
Were like those monstrous and barbaric shapes,
The ghosts of a no more remembered fame,
Which, from their unworn obelisks, look forth
In triumph o'er the palaces and tombs
Of those who were their conquerors : mouldering round
Those imaged to the pride of kings and priests,
A dark yet mighty faith, a power as wide
As is the world it wasted, and are now
But an astonishment ; even so the tools
And emblems of its last captivity,
Amid the dwellings of the peopled earth,
Stand, not o'erthrown, but unregarded now.
And those foul shapes, abhorred by god and man,
Which, under many a name and many a form
Strange, savage, ghastly, dark and execrable,
Were Jupiter, the tyrant of the world ;
And which the nations, panic-stricken, served
With blood, and hearts broken by long hope, and love
Dragged to his altars soiled and garlandless,
And slain among men's unreclaiming tears,
Flattering the thing they feared, which fear was hate,

Frown, mouldering fast, o'er their abandoned shrines :
The painted veil, by those who were, called life,
Which mimicked, as with colours idly spread,
All men believed and hoped, is torn aside ;
The loathsome mask has fallen, the man remains
Sceptreless, free, uncircumscribed, but man
Equal, unclassed, tribeless, and nationless,
Exempt from awe, worship, degree, the king
Over himself ; just, gentle, wise : but man
Passionless ; no, yet free from guilt or pain,
Which were, for his will made or suffered them,
Nor yet exempt, though ruling them like slaves,
From chance, and death, and mutability,
The clogs of that which else might oversoar
The loftiest star of unascended heaven,
Pinnaced dim in the intense inane.

END OF THE THIRD ACT.





PANTHEA AND IONE ASLEEP



SCENE, *a Part of the Forest near the Cave of PROMETHEUS. PANTHEA and IONE are sleeping: they awaken gradually during the first Song.*

Voice of unseen Spirits.

The pale stars are gone!
For the sun, their swift shepherd,
To their folds then compelling,
In the depths of the dawn,

Hastes, in meteor-eclipsing array, and they flee
Beyond his blue dwelling,
As fawns flee the leopard.

But where are ye?

*A Train of dark Forms and Shadows passes by confusedly,
singing.*

Here, oh, here:
We bear the bier

Of the Father of many a cancelled year!

Spectres we
Of the dead Hours be,
We bear Time to his tomb in eternity.

Strew, oh, strew
Hair, not yew !
Wet the dusty pall with tears, not dew !
Be the faded flowers
Of Death's bare bowers
Spread on the corpse of the King of Hours !

Haste, oh, haste !
As shades are chased,
Trembling, by day, from heaven's blue waste.
We melt away,
Like dissolving spray,
From the children of a diviner day,
With the lullaby
Of winds that die
On the bosom of their own harmony !

Ione.

What dark forms were they ?

Panthea.

The past Hours weak and grey,
With the spoil which their toil
Raked together
From the conquest but One could foil.

Ione.

Have they passed ?

Panthea.

They have passed ;
They outspeeded the blast,—
While 'tis said, they are fled :

Ione.

Whither, oh, whither?

Panthea.

To the dark, to the past, to the dead.

Voice of unseen Spirits.

Bright clouds float in heaven,

Dew-stars gleam on earth,

Waves assemble on ocean,

They are gathered and driven

By the storm of delight, by the panic of glee!

They shake with emotion,

They dance in their mirth.

But where are ye?

The pine boughs are singing

Old songs with new gladness,

The billows and fountains

Fresh music are flinging,

Like the notes of a spirit from land and from sea;

The storms mock the mountains

With the thunder of gladness.

But where are ye?

Ione. What charioteers are these?

Panthea.

Where are their chariots?

Semichorus of Hours.

The voice of the Spirits of Air and of Earth

Have drawn back the figured curtain of sleep

Which covered our being and darkened our birth

In the deep.

A Voice.

In the deep?

Semichorus II.

Oh, below the deep.

Semichorus I.

An hundred ages we had been kept
Cradled in visions of hate and care,
And each one who waked as his brother slept,
Found the truth—

Semichorus II.

Worse than his visions were !

Semichorus I.

We have heard the lute of Hope in sleep ;
We have known the voice of Love in dreams,
We have felt the wand of Power, and leap—

Semichorus II.

As the billows leap in the morning beams !

Chorus.

Weave the dance on the floor of the breeze,
Pierce with song heaven's silent light,
Enchant the day that too swiftly flees,
To check its flight ere the cave of night.

Once the hungry Hours were hounds
Which chased the day like a bleeding deer,
And it limped and stumbled with many wounds
Through the nightly dells of the desert year.

But now, oh weave the mystic measure
Of music, and dance, and shapes of light,
Let the Hours, and the spirits of might and pleasure,
Like the clouds and sunbeams, unite.

A Voice.

Unite !

Panthea. See, where the Spirits of the human mind
Wrapped in sweet sounds, as in bright veils, approach.

Chorus of Spirits.

We join the throng
Of the dance and the song,
By the whirlwind of gladness borne along ;
As the flying-fish leap
From the Indian deep,
And mix with the sea-birds, half asleep.

Chorus of Hours.

Whence come ye, so wild and so fleet,
For sandals of lightning are on your feet,
And your wings are soft and swift as thought,
And your eyes are as love which is veiled not ?

Chorus of Spirits.

We come from the mind
Of human kind
Which was late so dusk, and obscene, and blind ;
Now 'tis an ocean
Of clear emotion,
A heaven of serene and mighty motion.

From that deep abyss
Of wonder and bliss,
Whose caverns are crystal palaces ;
From those skiey towers
Where Thought's crowned powers
Sit watching your dance, ye happy Hours !

From the dim recesses
Of woven caresses,
Where lovers catch ye by your loose tresses ;
From the azure isles,
Where sweet Wisdom smiles,
Delaying your ships with her syren wiles.

From the temples high
Of Man's ear and eye,
Roofed over Sculpture and Poesy ;

From the murmurings
Of the unsealed springs
Where Science bedews his Daedal wings.

Years after years,
Through blood, and tears,
And a thick hell of hatreds, and hopes, and fears,
We waded and flew,
And the islets were few
Where the bud-blighted flowers of happiness grew.

Our feet now, every palm,
Are sandalled with calm,
And the dew of our wings is a rain of balm ;
And, beyond our eyes,
The human love lies
Which makes all it gazes on Paradise.

Chorus of Spirits and Hours.

Then weave the web of the mystic measure ;
From the depths of the sky and the ends of the earth,
Come, swift Spirits of might and of pleasure,
Fill the dance and the music of mirth,
As the waves of a thousand streams rush by
To an ocean of splendour and harmony !

Chorus of Spirits.

Our spoil is won,
Our task is done,
We are free to dive, or soar, or run ;
Beyond and around,
Or within the bound
Which clips the world with darkness round.

We'll pass the eyes
Of the starry skies
Into the hoar deep to colonize :

Death, Chaos, and Night,
From the sound of our flight,
Shall flee, like mists from a tempest's might.

And Earth, Air, and Light,
And the Spirit of Might,
Which drives round the stars in their fiery flight ;
And Love, Thought, and Breath,
The powers that quell Death,
Wherever we soar shall assemble beneath.

And our singing shall build
In the void's loose field
A world for the Spirit of Wisdom to wield ;
We will take our plan
From the new world of man,
And our work shall be called the Promethean.

Chorus of Hours.

Break the dance, and scatter the song ;
Let some depart, and some remain.

Semichorus I.

We, beyond heaven, are driven along :

Semichorus II.

Us the enchantments of earth retain :

Semichorus I.

Ceaseless, and rapid, and fierce, and free,
With the Spirits which build a new earth and sea,
And a heaven where yet heaven could never be.

Semichorus II.

Solemn, and slow, and serene, and bright,
Leading the Day and outspeeding the Night,
With the powers of a world of perfect light.

Semichorus I.

We whirl, singing loud, round the gathering sphere,
Till the trees and the beasts, and the clouds appear
From its chaos made calm by love, not fear.

Semichorus II.

We encircle the ocean and mountains of earth,
And the happy forms of its death and birth
Change to the music of our sweet mirth.

Chorus of Hours and Spirits.

Break the dance, and scatter the song,
Let some depart, and some remain,
Wherever we fly we lead along
In leashes, like starbeams, soft yet strong,
The clouds that are heavy with love's sweet rain.

Panthea. Ha! they are gone!

Ione.

Yet feel you no delight

From the past sweetness?

Panthea.

As the bare green hill

When some soft cloud vanishes into rain,
Laughs with a thousand drops of sunny water
To the unpavilioned sky!

Ione.

Even whilst we speak

New notes arise. What is that awful sound?

Panthea. 'Tis the deep music of the rolling world
Kindling within the strings of the waved air,
Aeolian modulations.

Ione.

Listen too,

How every pause is filled with under-notes,
Clear, silver, icy, keen awakening tones,
Which pierce the sense, and live within the soul,
As the sharp stars pierce winter's crystal air
And gaze upon themselves within the sea.

Panthea. But see where through two openings in the
forest

Which hanging branches overcanopy,
And where two runnels of a rivulet,
Between the close moss violet-inwoven,
Have made their path of melody, like sisters
Who part with sighs that they may meet in smiles,
Turning their dear disunion to an isle
Of lovely grief, a wood of sweet sad thoughts ;
Two visions of strange radiance float upon
The ocean-like enchantment of strong sound,
Which flows intenser, keener, deeper yet
Under the ground and through the windless air.

Ione. I see a chariot like that thinnest boat,
In which the mother of the months is borne
By ebbing night into her western cave,
When she upsprings from interlunar dreams,
O'er which is curved an orblike canopy
Of gentle darkness, and the hills and woods
Distinctly seen through that dusk airy veil,
Regard like shapes in an enchanter's glass ;
Its wheels are solid clouds, azure and gold,
Such as the genii of the thunder-storm
Pile on the floor of the illumined sea
When the sun rushes under it ; they roll
And move and grow as with an inward wind ;
Within it sits a wingèd infant, white
Its countenance, like the whiteness of bright snow,
Its plumes are as feathers of sunny frost,
Its limbs gleam white, through the wind-flowing folds
Of its white robe, woof of aetherial pearl.
Its hair is white, the brightness of white light
Scattered in strings ; yet its two eyes are heavens
Of liquid darkness, which the Deity
Within seems pouring, as a storm is poured
From jagged clouds, out of their arrowy lashes,
Tempering the cold and radiant air around,
With fire that is not brightness ; in its hand
It sways a quivering moon-beam, from whose point

A guiding power directs the chariot's prow
Over its wheelèd clouds, which as they roll
Over the grass, and flowers, and waves, wake sounds,
Sweet as a singing rain of silver dew.

Panthea. And from the other opening in the wood
Rushes, with loud and whirlwind harmony,
A sphere, which is as many thousand spheres,
Solid as crystal, yet through all its mass
Flow, as through empty space, music and light :
Ten thousand orbs involving and involved,
Purple and azure, white, and green, and golden,
Sphere within sphere ; and every space between
Peopled with unimaginable shapes,
Such as ghosts dream dwell in the lampless deep,
Yet each inter-transparent, and they whirl
Over each other with a thousand motions,
Upon a thousand sightless axles spinning,
And with the force of self-destroying swiftness,
Intensely, slowly, solemnly roll on,
Kindling with mingled sounds, and many tones,
Intelligible words and music wild.
With mighty whirl the multitudinous orb
Grinds the bright brook into an azure mist
Of elemental subtlety, like light ;
And the wild odour of the forest flowers,
The music of the living grass and air,
The emerald light of leaf-entangled beams
Round its intense yet self-conflicting speed,
Seem kneaded into one aërial mass
Which drowns the sense. Within the orb itself,
Pillowed upon its alabaster arms,
Like to a child o'erwearied with sweet toil,
On its own folded wings, and wavy hair,
The Spirit of the Earth is laid asleep,
And you can see its little lips are moving,
Amid the changing light of their own smiles,
Like one who talks of what he loves in dream.

Ione. 'Tis only mocking the orb's harmony.

Panthea. And from a star upon its forehead, shoot,
Like swords of azure fire, or golden spears
With tyrant-quelling myrtle overtwin'd,
Embleming heaven and earth united now,
Vast beams like spokes of some invisible wheel
Which whirl as the orb whirls, swifter than thought,
Filling the abyss with sun-like lightnings,
And perpendicular now, and now transverse,
Pierce the dark soil, and as they pierce and pass,
Make bare the secrets of the earth's deep heart ;
Infinite mine of adamant and gold,
Valueless stones, and unimagined gems,
And caverns on crystalline columns poised
With vegetable silver overspread ;
Wells of unfathomed fire, and water springs
Whence the great sea, even as a child is fed,
Whose vapours clothe earth's monarch mountain-tops
With kingly, ermine snow. The beams flash on
And make appear the melancholy ruins
Of cancelled cycles ; anchors, beaks of ships ;
Planks turned to marble ; quivers, helms, and spears,
And gorgon-headed targes, and the wheels
Of scythèd chariots, and the emblazonry
Of trophies, standards, and armorial beasts,
Round which death laughed, sepulchred emblems
Of dead destruction, ruin within ruin !
The wrecks beside of many a city vast,
Whose population which the earth grew over
Was mortal, but not human ; see, they lie,
Their monstrous works, and uncouth skeletons,
Their statues, homes and fanes ; prodigious shapes
Huddled in grey annihilation, split,
Jammed in the hard, black deep ; and over these,
The anatomies of unknown wingèd things,
And fishes which were isles of living scale,
And serpents, bony chains, twisted around

The iron crags, or within heaps of dust
To which the tortuous strength of their last pangs
Had crushed the iron crags ; and over these
The jagged alligator, and the might
Of earth-convulsing behemoth, which once
Were monarch beasts, and on the slimy shores,
And weed-overgrown continents of earth,
Increased and multiplied like summer worms
On an abandoned corpse, till the blue globe
Wrapped deluge round it like a cloke, and they
Yelled, gasped, and were abolished ; or some God
Whose throne was in a comet, passed, and cried,
Be not ! And like my words they were no more.

The Earth.

The joy, the triumph, the delight, the madness !
The boundless, overflowing, bursting gladness,
The vaporous exultation not to be confined !
Ha ! ha ! the animation of delight
Which wraps me, like an atmosphere of light,
And bears me as a cloud is borne by its own wind.

The Moon.

Brother mine, calm wanderer,
Happy globe of land and air,
Some Spirit is darted like a beam from thee,
Which penetrates my frozen frame,
And passes with the warmth of flame,
With love, and odour, and deep melody
Through me, through me !

The Earth.

Ha ! ha ! the caverns of my hollow mountains,
My cloven fire-crags, sound-exulting fountains
Laugh with a vast and inextinguishable laughter.
The oceans, and the deserts, and the abysses,
And the deep air's unmeasured wildernesses,
Answer from all their clouds and billows, echoing after.

They cry aloud as I do. Sceptred curse,
Who all our green and azure universe
Threatenedst to muffle round with black destruction,
 sending
A solid cloud to rain hot thunder-stones,
And splinter and knead down my children's bones,
All I bring forth, to one void mass battering and blending :

Until each crag-like tower, and storied column,
Palace, and obelisk, and temple solemn,
My imperial mountains crowned with cloud, and snow,
 and fire ;
My sea-like forests, every blade and blossom
Which finds a grave or cradle in my bosom,
Were stamped by thy strong hate into a lifeless mire.

How art thou sunk, withdrawn, covered, drunk up
By thirsty nothing, as the brackish cup
Drained by a desert-troop, a little drop for all ;
And from beneath, around, within, above,
Filling thy void annihilation, love
Burst in like light on caves cloven by the thunder-ball.

The Moon.

The snow upon my lifeless mountains
Is loosened into living fountains,
My solid oceans flow, and sing, and shine :
A spirit from my heart bursts forth,
It clothes with unexpected birth
My cold bare bosom : Oh ! it must be thine
 On mine, on mine !

Gazing on thee I feel, I know
Green stalks burst forth, and bright flowers grow,

And living shapes upon my bosom move :
Music is in the sea and air,
Winged clouds soar here and there,
Dark with the rain new buds are dreaming of :
'Tis love, all love !

The Earth.

It interpenetrates my granite mass,
Through tangled roots and trodden clay doth pass,
Into the utmost leaves and delicatest flowers ;
Upon the winds, among the clouds 'tis spread,
It wakes a life in the forgotten dead,
They breathe a spirit up from their obscurest bowers.

And like a storm bursting its cloudy prison
With thunder, and with whirlwind, has arisen
Out of the lampless caves of unimagined being :
With earthquake shock and swiftness making shiver
Thought's stagnant chaos, unremoved for ever,
Till hate, and fear, and pain, light-vanquished shadows,
fleeing,

Leave Man, who was a many-sided mirror,
Which could distort to many a shape of error,
This true fair world of things, a sea reflecting love ;
Which over all his kind as the sun's heaven
Gliding o'er ocean, smooth, serene, and even
Darting from starry depths radiance and life, doth move,

Leave Man, even as a leprous child is left,
Who follows a sick beast to some warm cleft
Of rocks, through which the might of healing springs is
poured ;
Then when it wanders home with rosy smile,
Unconscious, and its mother fears awhile
It is a spirit, then, weeps on her child restored.

Man, oh, not men ! a chain of linkèd thought,
Of love and might to be divided not,
Compelling the elements with adamantine stress ;
As the sun rules, even with a tyrant's gaze,
The unquiet republic of the maze
Of planets, struggling fierce towards heaven's free wilder-
ness.

Man, one harmonious soul of many a soul,
Whose nature is its own divine control,
Where all things flow to all, as rivers to the sea ;
Familiar acts are beautiful through love ;
Labour, and pain, and grief, in life's green grove
Sport like tame beasts,—none knew how gentle they
could be !

His will, with all mean passions, bad delights,
And selfish cares, its trembling satellites,
A spirit ill to guide, but mighty to obey,
Is as a tempest-wingèd ship, whose helm
Love rules, through waves which dare not over-
whelm,
Forcing life's wildest shores to own its sovereign sway.

All things confess his strength. Through the cold
mass
Of marble and of colour his dreams pass ;
Bright threads whence mothers weave the robes their
children wear ;
Language is a perpetual Orphic song,
Which rules with Daedal harmony a throng
Of thoughts and forms, which else senseless and shapeless
were.

The lightning is his slave ; heaven's utmost deep
Gives up her stars, and like a flock of sheep

They pass before his eye, are numbered, and roll on !
The tempest is his steed, he strides the air ;
And the abyss shouts from her depth laid bare,
Heaven, hast thou secrets? Man unveils me ; I have
none.

The Moon.

The shadow of white death has passed
From my path in heaven at last,
A clinging shroud of solid frost and sleep ;
And through my newly-woven bowers,
Wander happy paramours,
Less mighty, but as mild as those who keep
Thy vales more deep.

The Earth.

As the dissolving warmth of dawn may fold
A half unfrozen dew-globe, green, and gold,
And crystalline, till it becomes a wingèd mist,
And wanders up the vault of the blue day,
Outlives the noon, and on the sun's last ray
Hangs o'er the sea, a fleece of fire and amethyst.

The Moon.

Thou art folded, thou art lying
In the light which is undying
Of thine own joy, and heaven's smile divine ;
All suns and constellations shower
On thee a light, a life, a power
Which doth array thy sphere ; thou pourest thine
On mine, on mine !

The Earth.

I spin beneath my pyramid of night,
Which points into the heavens dreaming delight,

Murmuring victorious joy in my enchanted sleep ;
As a youth lulled in love-dreams faintly sighing,
Under the shadow of his beauty lying,
Which round his rest a watch of light and warmth doth
keep.

The Moon.

As in the soft and sweet eclipse,
When soul meets soul on lovers' lips,
High hearts are calm, and brightest eyes are dull ;
So when thy shadow falls on me,
Then am I mute and still, by thee
Covered ; of thy love, Orb most beautiful,
Full, oh, too full !

Thou art speeding round the sun
Brightest world of many a one ;
Green and azure sphere which shinest
With a light which is divinest
Among all the lamps of Heaven
To whom life and light is given ;
I, thy crystal paramour
Borne beside thee by a power
Like the polar Paradise,
Magnet-like of lovers' eyes ;
I, a most enamoured maiden
Whose weak brain is overladen
With the pleasure of her love,
Maniac-like around thee move
Gazing, an insatiate bride,
On thy form from every side
Like a Maenad, round the cup
Which Agave lifted up
In the weird Cadmaean forest.
Brother, whereso'er thou soarest
I must hurry, whirl and follow
Through the heavens wide and hollow,

Sheltered by the warm embrace
 Of thy soul from hungry space,
 Drinking from thy sense and sight
 Beauty, majesty, and might,
 As a lover or a chameleon
 Grows like what it looks upon,
 As a violet's gentle eye
 Gazes on the azure sky
 Until its hue grows like what it beholds,
 As a grey and watery mist
 Grows like solid amethyst
 Athwart the western mountain it enfolds,
 When the sunset sleeps
 Upon its snow.

The Earth.

And the weak day weeps
 That it should be so.

Oh, gentle Moon, the voice of thy delight
 Falls on me like thy clear and tender light
 Soothing the seaman, borne the summer night,
 Through isles for ever calm ;
 Oh, gentle Moon, thy crystal accents pierce
 The caverns of my pride's deep universe,
 Charming the tiger joy, whose tramlings fierce
 Made wounds which need thy balm.

Panthea. I rise as from a bath of sparkling water,
 A bath of azure light, among dark rocks,
 Out of the stream of sound.

Ione.

Ah me ! sweet sister,
 The stream of sound has ebbed away from us,
 And you pretend to rise out of its wave,
 Because your words fall like the clear, soft dew
 Shaken from a bathing wood-nymph's limbs and hair.

Panthea. Peace ! peace ! A mighty Power, which is
 as darkness,

Is rising out of Earth, and from the sky
Is showered like night, and from within the air
Bursts, like eclipse which had been gathered up
Into the pores of sunlight : the bright visions,
Wherein the singing spirits rode and shone,
Gleam like pale meteors through a watery night.

Ione. There is a sense of words upon mine ear.

Panthea. An universal sound like words : Oh, list !

Demogorgon.

Thou, Earth, calm empire of a happy soul,
Sphere of divinest shapes and harmonies,
Beautiful orb ! gathering as thou dost roll
The love which paves thy path along the skies :

The Earth.

I hear : I am as a drop of dew that dies.

Demogorgon.

Thou, Moon, which gazest on the nightly Earth
With wonder, as it gazes upon thee ;
Whilst each to men, and beasts, and the swift birth
Of birds, is beauty, love, calm, harmony :

The Moon.

I hear : I am a leaf shaken by thee !

Demogorgon.

Ye kings of suns and stars, Daemons and Gods,
Aetherial Dominations, who possess
Elysian, windless, fortunate abodes
Beyond Heaven's constellated wilderness :

A Voice from above.

Our great Republic hears, we are bless'd, and bless.

Demogorgon.

Ye happy dead, whom beams of brightest verse
Are clouds to hide, not colours to portray,
Whether your nature is that universe
Which once ye saw and suffered—

A Voice from beneath.

Or as they
Whom we have left, we change and pass away.

Demogorgon.

Ye elemental Genii, who have homes
From man's high mind even to the central stone
Of sullen lead ; from Heaven's star-fretted domes
To the dull weed some sea-worm battens on :

A confused Voice.

We hear : thy words waken Oblivion.

Demogorgon.

Spirits, whose homes are flesh : ye beasts and birds,
Ye worms, and fish ; ye living leaves and buds ;
Lightning and wind ; and ye untameable herds,
Meteors and mists, which throng air's solitudes :

A Voice.

Thy voice to us is wind among still woods.

Demogorgon.

Man, who wert once a despot and a slave ;
A dupe and a deceiver ; a decay ;
A traveller from the cradle to the grave
Through the dim night of this immortal day :

All.

Speak : thy strong words may never pass away.

Demogorgon.

This is the day, which down the void abysm
At the Earth-born's spell yawns for Heaven's despotism,

And Conquest is dragged captive through the deep :
Love, from its awful throne of patient power
In the wise heart, from the last giddy hour

Of dead endurance, from the slippery, steep,
And narrow verge of crag-like agony, springs
And folds over the world its healing wings.

Gentleness, Virtue, Wisdom, and Endurance,
These are the seals of that most firm assurance

Which bars the pit over Destruction's strength ;
And if, with infirm hand, Eternity,
Mother of many acts and hours, should free

The serpent that would clasp her with his length ;
These are the spells by which to re-assume
An empire o'er the disentangled doom.

To suffer woes which Hope thinks infinite ;
To forgive wrongs darker than death or night ;

To defy Power, which seems omnipotent ;
To love, and bear ; to hope till Hope creates
From its own wreck the thing it contemplates ;

Neither to change, nor falter, nor repent ;
This, like thy glory, Titan, is to be
Good, great and joyous, beautiful and free ;
This is alone Life, Joy, Empire, and Victory.

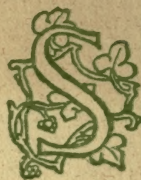
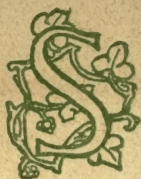






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